United Nations

A/53/PV.30

General Assembly

Fifty-third Session

Official Records

30th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 6 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 37

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

Report of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives (A/53/45)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/211)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/53/210)

Draft decision (A/53/45, para. 87)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before proceeding, I should like to inform members of the Assembly that in a letter dated 30 September 1998 addressed to me, the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of September, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the Observer of Switzerland on agenda item 37, "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development".

Given the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear a statement in plenary meeting by the Observer of Switzerland on this item?

It was so decided.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I have the honour to address this plenary meeting of the General Assembly, which is convened to consider agenda item 37, entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development".

It is my distinct pleasure to begin by extending congratulations to you, Mr. President, on behalf of the Group, on your well-deserved election and to express our readiness to work together with you and the other members of the Bureau in successfully addressing the many issues on the agenda of the fifty-third session.

Let me also express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the several reports he has issued on this agenda item and for his efforts to substantively achieve the goals set out in Copenhagen at the World Summit for Social Development.

Social development is one of the most critical issues of the day. It was, in fact, the great importance which the international community attaches to social development that prompted the convening of a summit-level meeting to consider its myriad aspects and complexities and to devise a common world strategy

98-86003 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

which would lead to a general improvement in living conditions throughout the world. And, while the World Summit did succeed in strengthening resolve at the highest levels of government to find solutions to the perennial questions of poverty, unemployment and social integration and in translating that resolve into genuine, substantive and meaningful change, serious problems and obstacles nevertheless persist.

Three years have elapsed since Copenhagen. In two years' time the General Assembly will meet in a special session to assess how far we have come and what constraints have been encountered in follow-up activity. Yet at this point in time a discouraging trend is emerging whereby the enthusiasm so vocally expressed at the Summit is translating into little more than a superficial improvement in the human condition. Not only has the international community failed to move significantly forward since the World Summit, but the awesome force of globalization, which held such promise, is being squandered. It is not being harnessed for a decisive assault on poverty and unemployment and to end social exclusion, but rather is becoming yet another venue to press the advantage of the strong over the weak and to increase the gap between haves and have-nots.

The international community is now experiencing a slowdown in the growth of world output and trade, and stands at the brink of an economic abyss. At the same time, despite the pronouncements at the World Summit for Social Development, greater emphasis has been placed on anti-inflationary policies at the expense of those necessary for full employment. Within such a global environment, the goals of the World Summit for Social Development have become even more difficult to attain, particularly for the developing countries. It is therefore of great concern to the Group of 77 and China that the achievement of sustainable human development is becoming further removed from reality.

Today, in the absence of any substantial effort on the part of the international community to support its commitments with financial resources and development assistance, even the best efforts to eradicate poverty remain seriously hobbled. Three years after the World Summit, I am compelled to restate an old refrain: that a multilateral effort for development which includes a serious effort towards financing for development is urgently needed. In this regard, we can find some encouragement in the two-day high-level dialogue of the General Assembly, convened last month, which contributed to an increased awareness and understanding of the economic and social impact of globalization and the need for international cooperation to effectively address the emerging global situation.

The Group of 77 and China readily accepted that globalization and market liberalization presented new and considerable opportunities to enhance national wealth equitably, to increase employment and to further integrate global society. However, the concept of development as a special part of the multilateral support system has been replaced by the laissez-faire approach to the globalized economy. And recent history has brought to life the risks and challenges that come with following a single doctrine, with a number of countries now experiencing economic downturns and others plunging into devastating economic crisis and recession.

The recent financial crisis that has wrought havoc in Asia and reverberated throughout the world clearly illustrates the need for the international community to strengthen its management role in the world economy. We need to establish surveillance and regulatory frameworks on short-term capital flows and trade in currencies, while at the same time allowing for the liberalization of economies at their own pace. On a broader level, the current state of the global economy has proved that the economic development and stability of developing countries is in the long-term interests of the more developed countries, and that the international community as a whole has a vested interest in the social and economic well-being of all its members, not merely a select few.

The Group would therefore draw attention to one important lesson learned which demands further consideration: that the social and economic development programmes of the developing countries need to proceed within the context of multilateral cooperation for development. We need to return to the Summit Programme of Action and approach critical development issues on a sound and predictable basis. Concurrent with our efforts to revive this process through such means as the North-South dialogue, we also recognize the need for the developing countries to broaden and intensify South-South cooperation. Of great importance in this regard is the Group of 77 initiative on a South summit, to be held prior to the Millennium Assembly in the year 2000.

Turning to the institutional level, let me note that we in the Group of 77 and China welcome the efforts that have been made through the United Nations to forge an international consensus which not only recognize existing problems but seek agreement on how best to solve them.

In this regard, we would like to commend the efforts that have been made within the Organization to promote an integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up to all of the major international conferences in the social, economic and related fields. The activities of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, which established its thematic ad hoc inter-agency task forces, and the work of the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council and the newly created Department of Economic and Social Affairs is noteworthy. We are confident that these efforts will greatly contribute to the success of the special session in the year 2000.

Let me add also that we support the efforts of the Organization to formulate general guidelines and a common framework for national reporting. Certainly, national capacities to monitor and evaluate the progress made in implementing the Summit outcome must be enhanced. Equally important is an accurate and ongoing assessment of the global trends. The issuance by the Secretary-General of the report on the world social situation in time for consideration by the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session is therefore necessary. The Group would also join in requesting that the appropriate documentation be prepared by the Secretariat focusing on implementation of the World Summit commitments, particularly in the light of the current economic situation.

In closing, the Group of 77 and China would once again urge their developed country partners to join with it in genuine partnership based on mutual interests, common benefits and equitably shared responsibilities. The time for the international community to reduce poverty has long since passed; it should not merely echo the many cries for help. We in the Group will redouble our efforts for a strengthened role for the United Nations in promoting international cooperation for economic and social development, and, within our limited capacity, we will strive to implement the Declaration and Programme of Action. We will work within our means to undertake additional concrete work to move towards the goals set at Copenhagen.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): I have already on an earlier occasion had the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the assumption of your high office. I reiterate today our pledge to work with you and all other delegations for a successful outcome of this session of the General Assembly.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association member of the European Economic Area — Iceland — align themselves with this statement.

I gladly take up the invitation just proffered by our colleague from Indonesia to engage in a genuine partnership, and in that regard let me comment briefly on the agenda item before us.

The outcome of the Social Summit represents a milestone in the process of defining social development as an important component of sustainable development. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action proclaim that the ultimate aim of development is to improve the quality of life of all people. The heads of State or Government gathered in Copenhagen stated that the goal of social integration should be a society for all in which people have the right and the ability to participate in decisions affecting their lives. The Copenhagen commitments place the individual human being at the centre of development and ask for particular efforts to empower people belonging to vulnerable groups in order to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities. They enjoin Governments to ensure the equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all women and men. The Social Summit recognized that democracy and good governance are essential building blocks for meeting the objectives of sustainable development, prosperity and peace.

The commitments adopted by representatives of 186 States in Copenhagen remain as valid and as comprehensive today as when they were agreed. The European Union is fully committed to the implementation of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit. We welcome the establishment of a preparatory process leading up to the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000, dedicated to an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit.

We pledge our support for a constructive discussion on these issues involving regional groups, States and international organizations, as well as all other actors in the field of social development, to bring about a meaningful outcome of this important event. We stress that the participation of civil society in these debates, including the preparatory process, is crucial to ensure that an even broader range of views is heard. This will help enrich our discussion. An open exchange of views

on best practices and lessons learned, including of obstacles encountered, will allow strategies to emerge on ways to further implement the commitments and objectives agreed upon in Copenhagen.

Comprehensive and topical information provided on a voluntary basis by United Nations Member States on the progress made in the implementation of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit — in addition to the information that is already available within the United Nations system — will be useful in this context. We are looking forward with interest to the general guidelines concerning the structure and common framework for national reporting.

The World Summit for Social Development was not an isolated event. Its outcome fed into and drew upon the targets, strategies and calls for action adopted by a great number of other United Nations world conferences and summits held in this decade. Taken together, the outcomes of these global conferences constitute a comprehensive development agenda with many cross-cutting themes. While the first responsibility for the implementation of the conference commitments lies with Governments, the United Nations system is an important instrument for helping them meet this challenge.

It is in this context that we wish to stress that both quantitative and qualitative data, benchmarks and internationally comparable indicators are needed to effectively monitor progress in the implementation of the outcome of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Social Summit. The European Union notes with interest that initiatives aiming at the elaboration of common indicators have been launched by, *inter alia*, the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee and interested non-governmental organizations. We welcome the decision taken by the Economic and Social Council to devote an informal meeting in 1999 to the issue of basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. We are convinced that this meeting will stimulate better coordination of the ongoing initiatives within and outside the United Nations system.

The European Union also welcomes the decision taken by the Economic and Social Council to dedicate the high-level segment of its substantive session in 1999 to the role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women. These issues figure prominently on the Copenhagen agenda.

Some days ago, on 1 October, we witnessed the official launching of the International Year of Older Persons, which will be observed in 1999. "Towards a society for all ages" was chosen as the overarching theme for this year in order to highlight the fact that aging is a multigenerational experience. Preparations for this year have been pushed forward with remarkable enthusiasm at the local, national and international levels. The organization of national committees, conferences, workshops, networks and media strategies, as well as the activities of the United Nations consultative group for the International Year of Older Persons, have stimulated interest and action in support of the year. The European Union notes with satisfaction that a gender perspective is increasingly integrated into the preparations of the year, thus fostering and deepening our understanding of the role, the rights and the needs of older women.

The European Union holds the view that the fight against poverty must be placed at the heart and in the mainstream of international development cooperation. The Union reaffirms its commitment to meeting the target of reducing the proportion of the world's population living in extreme poverty by 50 per cent by 2015. We believe that policies that aim at energizing the capacity of poor women and men to shape the processes and decisions that affect their lives will eventually enable them to lift themselves out of poverty. Poverty eradication strategies have to give particular attention to the specific constraints faced by women in exercising their rights, claiming resources and gaining equal access to quality education, health care and other basic social services. Furthermore, we believe that the path to social, economic and cultural progress is largely determined by the living conditions that are offered to the young generation. Social impact assessments should be undertaken in the design of all policies to ensure that all people, in particular the poorest and those with special needs — including children and persons with disabilities — can fully participate and benefit from them.

We believe that the support of the international community both at the bilateral and multilateral levels is essential in helping foster an environment in which Governments take the lead in assessing poverty situations and developing national poverty eradication strategies and programmes. The mobilization of financial resources for poverty eradication, including from private as well as from new and innovative sources, and a more determined

orientation of development cooperation to this goal need to be fully explored. The European Union remains concerned about the declining trend in total official development assistance. We recognize the continued importance of official development assistance and reiterate that efforts should be strengthened to achieve the agreed official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product as soon as possible. We note the work that countries have undertaken in developing the 20/20 concept, and we are looking forward with interest to the outcome of the Hanoi conference that will be held on this issue this month.

The European Union maintains that an enterprising and inclusive society needs to give all citizens the opportunity to work and to contribute to broader economic and social development. We consider social protection as a productive factor and underline that economic reform has to be linked to social dialogue in order to enhance understanding and acceptance by all actors concerned. In keeping with the agreement reached at the Luxembourg jobs summit in November 1997, all 15 member States of the European Union submitted employment action plans to the Cardiff European Council in June this year. The new employment strategies focus on the following policy areas: enhancement of the employability of the active population, in particular of the young, the long-term unemployed and women; development of skills, training and lifelong learning; improvement of conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises and the self-employed; and, finally, strengthening the policies for equal opportunities between women and men as well as for people with disabilities.

The first ever World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth was convened at the invitation of the Government of Portugal and organized in cooperation with the United Nations in Lisbon last August. Representatives of some 140 countries, among them more than a hundred Ministers, discussed the broad range of youth-related issues, thereby intensifying cooperation between them. The Conference was preceded by the third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, which took place in Braga. This youth gathering was organized by the United Nations in partnership with the Portuguese National Youth Council. Both Conferences provided contributions to the further implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

With these and many similar activities the European Union and its member States wish to underscore their ongoing strong commitment to the results achieved in Copenhagen three years ago and to their continued validity for the benefit of all humankind.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): At the 1995 World Summit for Social Development leaders of various countries made solemn commitments with regard to the goals for social development and measures to reach such goals. Over the past three years since then, the international community has made great efforts and achieved positive progress in effectively implementing the outcome of the Summit. This is very heartening indeed.

The United Nations has now started preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives, to be held in the year 2000. At the special session achievements made and lessons learned in the five years since 1995 will be reviewed, and plans will be made for social development in the new century. The Chinese delegation would like to make the following observations in this connection.

First, social development strategies reflecting the specific characteristics and national conditions of the country concerned should be implemented. Countries differ in their economic bases as well as their political systems and cultural traditions. The priorities of their social development and the difficulties they face vary even more. Therefore, we believe that in identifying the line of thought, methods and specific measures for social development countries should seek to implement effective social development strategies and plans that fit their national conditions.

Secondly, international cooperation should be strengthened. Developed countries should contribute even more to the promotion of the global social development process. One of the three main themes of the Summit was the eradication of poverty. This is also a priority issue facing the vast number of developing countries. It is true that national Governments should shoulder the main responsibilities in realizing the goals of the Summit, but international cooperation and support are crucial to helping the developing countries to wipe out poverty and speed up their social development.

Thirdly, the role of the United Nations, as well as of other international and regional organizations, should be strengthened. Since the beginning of the 1990s a number of international conferences on the question of development have been convened within the United

Nations system. The United Nations should play a central and coordinating role in implementing the follow-up activities. Specifically, the United Nations should mobilize and pool financial resources and promote technological cooperation. If the United Nations can do something concrete in these fields, that will be the most precious contribution to the implementation of the commitments made at the Summit.

China is a developing country with a population of 1.2 billion. It is faced with such formidable tasks as eliminating poverty, creating jobs and promoting social development. Since 1995 the Chinese Government has made tremendous efforts in implementing the commitments made at the Summit.

The Chinese Government has always made the elimination of poverty an important part of its programme for national economic and social development. The central Government strives to ensure resources input into this endeavour by earmarking funds and preferential loans for these areas every year. After years of untiring efforts, China's poverty-stricken population had been reduced from 80 million at the beginning of the 1990s to 50 million at the end of 1997. This summer China was hit by a huge flood, unparalleled in the past hundred years. A total of 21.2 million hectares of land was flooded and 223 million people were affected by the flood, which caused a direct economic loss of over $20 billion dollars. This has made our poverty relief task even more formidable.

China is rich in labour resources. Due to the reform of State-owned enterprises and a major readjustment of the industrial mix in the transition from a planned economy to a socialist market economy, China is now facing severe challenges in the area of employment, which has been aggravated by the Asian financial crisis. The increasing numbers of laid off and unemployed workers are putting more pressure on the issue of employment. By the end of 1997, 12 million factory workers had been laid off. The re-employment of unemployed and laid off workers has become a hindrance to China's economic development. To solve this problem, the Chinese Government launched the "Re-employment Project", which calls upon enterprises, jobless individuals themselves and society to mobilize, to look for jobs and to create jobs. At the same time, a large number of new jobs are being created by building more infrastructure, expanding service industry, opening up small and medium-sized enterprises and developing community services. The Chinese Government is determined to try every means to keep the unemployment rate in the urban areas at around 3.5 per cent this year.

China is a multi-ethnic country. Enhancing social integration and promoting ethnic unity are crucial to social stability and social development. For ethnic minority areas the Chinese Government has instituted a regional autonomy system. It also gives vigorous support to the economic development of these regions, with a view to realizing the common progress of the whole of society. The Chinese Government also pays much attention to the livelihood and well-being of vulnerable groups, such as the young, the elderly and the disabled. It has formulated a series of policies and laws to protect their rights and interests, encouraging and helping them to participate in social life and share society's material and cultural achievements.

With the twenty-first century just around the corner, humanity is still faced with quite a number of difficulties and has a long way to go on the road to social development. The United Nations can play a more active and important role in this connection. Countries should strengthen their exchange and cooperation in the social development field. We should draw on past experience and take action to further promote sustained development around the globe.

Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan): The World Summit for Social Development was an important milestone in the history of the world community and was universally acknowledged as a forum which made a major contribution to solving the acute social problems that face mankind. At the same time, the ways proposed to solve these problems require further improvement, rationalization and adjustment to the real world economic situation.

It is therefore important, in our view, to further improve the ways of implementing the obligations assumed by Governments, stimulating active international and regional cooperation and disseminating positive experiences as important means of securing their implementation.

The delegation of Kazakhstan wishes to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for the report he has submitted on the agenda item under consideration today. It contains new information on the implementation of the Summit's decisions by intergovernmental organs, including the Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly, the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council.

Moreover, while this information is important and useful from the standpoint of choosing optimal ways to solve existing problems, there is an urgent need for further, broader and more effective action at all levels to eliminate poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. The task is to come up with more effective and concrete initiatives for solving the problems identified at Copenhagen.

The delegation of Kazakhstan notes with satisfaction the activity of the three ad hoc inter-agency task forces established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination to develop a coordinated approach to follow-up of the global United Nations conferences, as well as the steady and comprehensive implementation at the country level of the policy recommendations adopted at these conferences and at the Copenhagen Summit. Undoubtedly, national mechanisms and structures will, in the future, have to take due account of the work of these groups, which have given additional impetus to activities to implement the decisions of the Summit.

I should also like to emphasize the important coordinating role assigned in this respect to the newly established Department of Economic and Social Affairs and its Division for Social Policy and Development. We, for our part, hope for fruitful cooperation with them in terms of the participation of national experts in the work of the seminars and workshops planned by the United Nations and their support for research projects, which will undoubtedly contribute to identifying the existing obstacles and methods of overcoming them more effectively in order to attain the goals of Copenhagen.

In our view, the work of the intergovernmental institutions, programmes and funds of the United Nations and its regional commissions, as well as of the international financial institutions, is highly commendable. Acting in accordance with their mandates, they have made an appreciable contribution to promoting productive employment, combating poverty, incorporating the gender element into development programmes, conducting the experimental phase of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, developing guidelines and initiatives with respect to social capital, and so on.

Also noteworthy are the positive role of the United Nations in promoting the socio-economic development of the Central Asian region and, in particular, the development by the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific of the special programme for the economies of Central Asia. The purpose of this programme is to assist the States of the region in intensifying their mutual cooperation and promoting economic growth and integration into the economies of the European and Asian countries.

Yet another concrete step in the implementation of the decisions of the World Summit for Social Development was the holding in Almaty in July this year, through the joint efforts of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Kazakhstan, of the regional conference "Central Asia 2010: Economic and Social Development Prospects". The main purpose of the conference was to assess the progress of the reforms and identify the main problems and tasks of the countries with transition economies, including the eradication of poverty.

Kazakhstan is committed to the ideas of renewal and is carrying out radical economic transformations aimed above all at raising the standard of living of its people. The attainment of the goals of the World Summit for Social Development in Kazakhstan depends on how effectively and consistently these transformations will be implemented in the future.

On 30 September this year, the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nazarbaev, put forward a comprehensive programme of democratization, covering such important areas as elections, political parties, Parliament, civil society, the judicial system, the status of women and the mass media. Serious steps will be taken to resolve acute social problems, combat corruption and optimize the national administration. All of these measures are aimed at further protecting and guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of every citizen of our multi-ethnic society.

One of the main tasks Kazakhstan faces today is to create a broad and reliable system of protection for the economic system and the socio-economic health of Kazakhstan's population. In accordance with the programme, an Economic Policy Council has been set up on a permanent basis to agree on policy measures and respond promptly to any turn of events in the foreign countries affected by the economic crisis and in Kazakhstan itself so as to protect the banking system, economic agents, consumers and the economy as a whole from harm.

The Government of Kazakhstan has also developed new approaches to demarcating the budgetary sphere and

the entrepreneurial sector, drawing up and presenting a more transparent programme budget, and reforming social welfare mechanisms and new schemes for financing education and health care. A broad range of measures has been outlined, aimed at increasing employment and reducing unemployment levels.

The intention is to direct the resources of the State to programmes that promote economic growth and directly benefit the population in such areas as health care, education and vocational training. To ensure that the goals set are attained and the programmes adopted implemented in a coordinated manner, there are plans to organize the Government of the Republic on a better structured basis and to clarify the areas of activity and spheres of responsibility of its component parts, with compulsory subsequent accountability.

We are confident that these and other steps being taken in the context of the broad socio-economic and political reforms being conducted by the Government of Kazakhstan in the light of the recommendations of the World Summit for Social Development will yield positive results. We hope that these results will be useful to the work of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives.

Ms. Morgan-Moss (Panama) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour for the delegation of Panama, in its capacity as coordinator of the Rio Group, to make this statement on agenda item 37, "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development".

First of all, the Rio Group would like to thank the Secretary-General and the relevant offices of the Secretariat for the note and the report presented on this subject, contained in documents A/53/210 and A/53/211. These documents will serve as a guide and will be very useful in our work.

The States members of the Rio Group wish to reaffirm once again in this forum their commitment to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted at the World Summit for Social Development and endorsed, in General Assembly resolution 50/161 of 22 December 1995, as well as the importance they attach to the subject of social development in all its aspects.

This commitment has been actively undertaken as a matter of priority by the Rio Group. We are able to state with satisfaction that in 1995 the Group adopted the Buenos Aires Declaration on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, aimed at the regional implementation of the Copenhagen commitments.

The meetings of the heads of State or Government of the Rio Group, held in Bolivia and Paraguay in 1996 and 1997, respectively, reaffirmed regional determination to eradicate poverty and the conviction that a sustained process of economic and social development is fundamental for democratic stability and improvements in the population's standards of living.

Similarly, at the last meeting of the heads of State or Government of the Rio Group, held in Panama on 4 and 5 September 1998, the Group emphasized that political and economic progress in our region must be reflected in a lessening of social inequality. It also expressed the conviction that productive transformation will be sustainable over time only if we achieve higher levels of equity.

In addition to making a political commitment to this item, Latin America has defined in the São Paolo Consensus concrete actions to achieve the objectives set forth in the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. In resolution 52/25, the General Assembly welcomed the Consensus, to which the Rio Group reiterates its full support and adherence.

We also welcome the results of the thirty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development, whose agreed conclusions on the item, on "promoting of social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons", must be used as a guide by Governments to adopt measures at the local, national, regional and international levels in the area of social promotion, under the mediation of responsible Governments.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Rio Group takes this opportunity to thank the Chairman of the Commission for Social Development, Mr. Aurelio Fernández, for the important and professional job he has done this year, which has made it possible for the Commission to perform its work efficiently and in new ways. The Rio Group looks forward with optimism to the thirty-seventh session of the Commission. The items "Social services for all" and

"Initiation of the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit" will be of great importance in the review of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, planned for the year 2000. The latter item is particularly important because it defines areas in which new initiatives should be taken to promote the implementation of the Copenhagen agreements.

We give our full support to the work of the Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives. The Rio Group believes that the main objectives to be pursued during the preparatory process and in the year 2000 were clearly established at the first meeting of the committee, which was presided over by the representative of a member State of our Group. Particularly important is the decision of the preparatory committee that the special session will have the primary tasks of reaffirming the commitments agreed on at Copenhagen and of recommending concrete action to be taken at the national and international levels that will make possible the full implementation of the commitments entered into at the Social Summit. In this regard, the members of the Rio Group will devote all their efforts and creativity to placing individuals and people at the heart of development.

In that context, we attach special importance to participation by civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, both in the preparatory process and at the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000. The contribution of these sectors will be vital if the conclusions of the review process are to have a high degree of realism.

Similarly, the Rio Group takes note of the generous offer of the Government of Switzerland to host, in Geneva, the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the Social Summit and the review of further initiatives in the year 2000. We hope we will be able to contribute to the reaching of a consensus so that the Assembly will be able to adopt a decision in this regard.

Today, the world is in a difficult period characterized by a number of prominent factors, both positive and negative, whose coexistence, naturally, is confusing to the average citizen. For that reason, all Governments must make all efforts necessary to restore tranquillity to its people and enable them to create a more just and equitable society without any kind of social exclusions. The Rio Group is prepared to commit all its efforts to this task, which requires commitment, imagination, unity and idealism.

Ms. Montoya (United States of America): I would like first to review briefly what the United States has accomplished to achieve the objectives set at the Copenhagen Summit: alleviating poverty, creating jobs and effecting social integration. I will then concentrate my remarks on our views on the challenges to our work in the future.

The United States is committed to the goals of the Copenhagen Summit of 1995. We have made substantial progress to strengthen the family unit by initiating programmes to connect fathers to children, and to develop work skills to reduce dependency with welfare-to-work projects. We have increased education funding with federal investments and have endeavoured to set new educational standards. We have enhanced our health care policies to reduce infant mortality and to establish indicators of child well-being. We have adopted policies to renew our communities and to reduce crime with such innovative projects as neighbourhood development grants.

Our Government has worked closely with various domestic and international non-governmental organizations to promote civil society, create a social atmosphere of tolerance and compassion and integrate into our communities those who have been marginalized because of their race, gender, age or physical disability.

United States Government policies have resulted in expanding employment and in reforming the social welfare systems in our country. The progress in these two areas has contributed substantially to raising the living standards of ordinary American citizens.

According to the most recent United States Census Bureau report, in 1997 the income of the typical American household rose at twice the rate of inflation, and the percentage of people in poverty declined.

We still need to ensure that all members of our society participate in and enjoy the benefits of this economic growth. We are endeavouring to create a more equitable social system to include minorities, women, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities. We have increased the minimum wage and are addressing the issue of falling real wages in some sectors of our economy. We have undertaken health insurance reform to increase the welfare of working individuals and families.

I would now like to present our views on the future challenges. Since the Copenhagen Summit, the objective of the United States has remained the same: to work towards the eradication of extreme poverty through sustainable development. This means, of course, economic growth and investment in social development while respecting the environment. Respect for human rights, the protection of children and the empowerment of women are essential to that end.

One of the most serious challenges facing us continues to be that of living up to the Copenhagen commitment to place people at the centre of development in a globalized economy.

As we work together to overcome the current financial crisis, we cannot neglect social development. While economies adjust, readjust and grow, Governments and international organizations must accord high priority to identifying policies which hurt the poor. Public policies must enhance people's lives, increase their earning power and protect the most vulnerable from the negative impact of essential adjustments with well-targeted safety nets.

When we review our work towards achieving the Copenhagen objectives, we must place priority on important social issues such as family, education, health, safety and crime. We believe good governance is the key to achieving these objectives.

Governance is a critical issue that needs to be addressed at international as well as national levels. Democratic elections, the rule of law and transparency in political processes are the necessary conditions for the governed to have a say in government. We believe that an active civil society constitutes an important part of good governance. Civil society will also contribute to safeguarding civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. A vibrant civil society should include the social and economic groupings that represent the society's interests.

Another key element of our work towards achieving the Copenhagen objectives is education. Rapid advances in technology have placed a premium on new skills, new knowledge and, above all, the ability to adapt and learn. We must invest more in educating our children so they will have the basic training to keep up with these advances. We must also encourage working people to engage in continuous training to find new and better paying jobs, so they can earn a living wage. Governments and the private sector play important roles in accomplishing these goals.

We believe that the worst forms of poverty should be eliminated from the face of the earth by early in the next century. We must pay great attention to problems of severe malnutrition, unsafe drinking water and inadequate levels of sanitation and health care, including family planning and reproductive health care.

Despite the recent financial crises, the developing world has made great strides in reducing the worst symptoms of poverty: infant mortality, illiteracy, disease and starvation. Much, of course, remains to be achieved.

We must pay particular attention to women. We must recognize that women perform a disproportionate share of "unwaged" labour, such as child-rearing and family farming. We must make sure that their labour, is valued, that they have equal access to essential services such as education and health care and that they participate fully in the political, economic and social life of their communities.

We must provide equal opportunities for girls to receive an education, to participate in all aspects of society and to achieve success in any endeavour they choose. No doors should be closed to anyone.

We must also pay attention to the impact of globalization on older persons and on the disabled. We need to find ways to expand their participation in the process of globalization and to prevent them from falling victim to the new global trends.

Today, globalization has brought opportunities as well as challenges to the world. We must make solid progress on the important social issues I have outlined in order to take advantage of the opportunities to achieve sustainable social and economic development.

Finally, as we look towards meeting in Geneva in mid-2000 for the five-year review of the World Summit for Social Development, Member States and non-governmental organizations must recommit themselves to a global effort to achieve the goals set in Copenhagen.

Mr. Lee See-young (Republic of Korea): The 1995 World Summit for Social Development presented the international community with a unique opportunity to reformulate the concept of development. Human dignity and welfare have been integrated into the idea of development as its major components. Indeed, the Summit has served as a catalyst in moving the

international community towards human-centred development.

Since the Summit, Governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations have endeavoured to implement the commitments agreed upon in Copenhagen. Thus far, we have seen a number of positive outcomes and activities in this important area, with the ever growing involvement of civil society and the private sector at national, regional and international levels.

While a great deal more remains to be done, unfortunately the international economic crisis has struck the world economy, making our endeavours even harder. It has considerably undermined the political will and ability of many Governments to carry out their commitments in this field.

It is particularly regrettable that the hardest hit by the current crisis are the most vulnerable segments of populations: the unemployed, low-income families, the elderly, women and children. Without proper social safety nets in place, human suffering can reach devastating levels. A more daunting aspect of this crisis is the real danger that the progress many of these countries have so far accomplished in poverty reduction could be undone. Any economic readjustment programme of the Governments affected by the current crisis should address the problems of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. Moreover, long-term development objectives must never be forgotten.

Under these circumstances, it has become all the more important for the international community to reaffirm its strong will and determination to fulfil the objectives of the Social Summit. My delegation therefore appreciates this opportunity to address the agenda item under discussion today.

Allow me to share, in this context, the Republic of Korea's experiences in its process of social development over the past four decades.

Since the very beginning of our economic development, in the 1960s and 1970s, my Government has attached great importance to poverty eradication. A great deal of investment was put into building infrastructure, creating labour-intensive projects, promoting export-oriented industries and providing education. In the 1980s the focus was on the creation of high-quality jobs. As a result of these successive policies, the Republic of Korea was able to achieve an unprecedented level of economic growth in a very short period of time.

In this process, however, intrinsic weaknesses became evident in Korea's economic and social structure, which contributed to an increasing desire for a more equitable society and a more representative political system. The 1990s therefore augured the introduction of policies oriented to greater social justice and social integration. Unfortunately, it was precisely when the benefits of these social integration policies began to emerge that the recent financial crisis hit the Republic of Korea. Indeed, we are now faced with large-scale lay-offs, negative economic growth for the first time, after three decades of sustained growth at an average rate of 7 per cent per annum, and a decrease of per capita income due to the sharp increase of the foreign exchange rate.

Although the current crisis has caused unprecedented economic difficulties, my Government is committed to continuing to strengthen the social safety net. In this connection, my Government has opted to run a budget deficit, for the first time in many years, to provide the needed funds for consolidating the social security system.

With these financial means at its disposal, my Government has reinforced its welfare policy and unemployment assistance to vulnerable groups. A revised Presidential Decree of Employment Insurance, beginning 1 October 1998, is meant to subject all workplaces to the application of employment insurance. Also, the finalization of the Enforcement Decree on Employment Insurance will permit employers who keep their workers during the structural reform process to receive subsidies for one year.

For the low-income unemployed, livelihood protection is assured by governmental support for subsistence costs, tuition assistance and medical expenses. Income support is provided with the goal of improving the self-help abilities of the unemployed. At the local level, in an effort to alleviate the sufferings of the unemployed, provincial governments are providing temporary jobs to those who wish to earn wages until a permanent job is obtained.

The Government has also been providing various vocational training programmes for unemployed workers and for workers suffering from job insecurity. We expect that these programmes will allow participants not only to find new jobs, but also to prepare themselves for more sophisticated jobs.

In the area of unemployment, President Kim Dae-jung initiated substantive negotiations among the representatives of labour, business and Government, which enabled them to launch the first phase of the Tripartite Commission in January this year. The principal objective of this Commission was to work out an agreement which would govern the labour-business relationship in the months to come, with a view to fairly sharing the burden of the economic crisis. The most significant development in this process is that, for the first time in Korea's trade union history, all labour movements are involved in the current negotiations — a significant step forward towards economic recovery and social integration. Through the Commission, labour, business and Government have committed themselves to the faithful implementation of all aspects of economic programmes included in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reform package. The second phase of the Tripartite Commission's work was set in motion in June. The major economic actors in the Commission will continue to have close consultations, with a view to finding a consensus approach and integrating public opinion in the common effort to surmount the economic crisis.

Globalization has become the most important socio-economic phenomenon of this generation. It has permitted many economies to thrive over the past decades, opening doors of opportunity. However, globalization has proved to have its shortcomings and weaknesses, particularly in the area of social development. While an increasingly globalized world has brought many developing countries into the economic mainstream, the least developed countries, including many sub-Saharan African countries, have been further marginalized. In addition, the recent Asian financial crisis has made it all too clear that rapid globalization, without proper management, could seriously erode economies and their social integration processes. Indeed, the world needs to respond collectively to maximize its benefits and minimize its risks. As was agreed at the recent high-level dialogue on the impact of globalization, a new global partnership must be established, ensuring the more active participation of the developing world. In this global partnership, the United Nations is expected to play a leading role in promoting a constructive dialogue among all the actors concerned on the effect of globalization, particularly in the field of social development.

The key philosophy long espoused by President Kim Dae-jung is that democracy and free market principles are inseparable. Based upon such a philosophy, the Government of the Republic of Korea will continue to make determined efforts for accelerated socio-economic reform and further social integration in the struggle to overcome the current economic difficulties and, in the long run, to realize a truly democratic, market-oriented and socially secure economy. In the meantime, we remain actively committed to supporting the United Nations and the international community in their common endeavour to work towards poverty eradication and social justice. In this connection, the Assembly can be assured of the full support and active participation of the Korean Government in the preparatory work for the success of the special session of the General Assembly on social development in the year 2000.

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour and a pleasure to address the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, on behalf of the countries of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) and associated countries: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia and Chile.

My comments are intended to supplement the excellent statements on this subject made by Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77, and by Panama, on behalf of the Rio Group.

The international community is anxiously witnessing turbulence in the financial markets that is threatening to produce a global economic recession and consequent social crisis. Globalization is today acknowledged as a source of risk. However, not very long ago it was celebrated as a source of opportunity for all nations, particularly the smallest. Globalization and liberalization have certainly shown themselves to be realities that bring both benefits and risks to which all nations and the international community must know how to react, mainly so that we can take advantage of market forces for everyone's benefit. We must never forget that development must be at the service of individuals.

In order to deal with the insecurity of the present global economic and social situation, we must derive strength from the great international consensus represented by the World Summit for Social Development. Today more than ever we must reaffirm the political commitment reflected in the Declaration and Programme of Action endorsed by the Summit.

The Copenhagen commitments have been described as a new social contract at the global level because they place the individual at the centre of development. This is a fair assessment of the value of the Social Summit.

Today we can add that, within the cycle of United Nations economic and social conferences in the 1990s, it represents the consensus of the international community on how best to respond to the risks of globalization and channel the dynamic forces of globalization for the benefit of everyone.

In this sense, it is important to state that the Summit commitments are the commitments of all — both developed and developing countries. The social problems of poverty, exclusion and unemployment are universal. We therefore all committed ourselves in Copenhagen to put the economy at the service of individuals. The commitment of the developed world is to stand by the developing world, but also to implement the Summit commitments in its own societies, just as the developing countries bound themselves to do the same in theirs. One of the strengths of the Social Summit is that there is not a single North and a single South. The southern part of the North counts and the northern part of the South also counts in this new social contract.

The Preparatory Committee for the special session in the year 2000, Copenhagen +5, a Committee which Chile is proud to chair, recently adopted as its primary objective to reaffirm and not to renegotiate what was agreed at the Social Summit. This is a fundamental starting point for the Committee, which our countries firmly support, because the Social Summit agreements are an appropriate response by the international community to globalization.

The Preparatory Committee proceeds on the assumption that Copenhagen plus five cannot be a discussion about concepts or negotiation regarding texts. It must be about action that can be taken at the national, regional or global level to ensure that the commitments of our Heads of State and Government in 1995 become a reality in the lives of nations and individuals to eradicate poverty, create full employment and prevent social marginalization. Today, our job is to promote the full and faithful implementation of the Copenhagen commitments, evaluating the progress made and the difficulties to be overcome at all levels — local, national, regional and international.

The countries of MERCOSUR and associated countries give their complete support to the decision of the Preparatory Committee that the prime aim of Copenhagen +5 must be to identify and promote new initiatives and action to ensure that the Social Summit commitments are implemented. At the same time, we think it appropriate that this task be focused on the 10 commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration.

Similarly, we think that to achieve a successful General Assembly session able to launch concrete new initiatives, it must be open to all relevant actors. It must have the capacity to stimulate the imagination and sense of collective responsibility of all those active in the area of social development — parliaments, political parties, organizations of civil society, religious leaders, financial institutions, local authorities and the media. Ideally, this special session of the General Assembly will result in these actors' also taking initiatives within their own fields of action to complement and reinforce the measures we adopt during the special session.

The Commission for Social Development will begin its work this year looking forward to the special session in the year 2000, seeking the best way to carry out its fundamental task of examining national reports and identifying sectors where new initiatives are necessary in order to ensure compliance with the Copenhagen commitments. In this task our delegations will give it their full support.

This is not the time to go into the details of how best to proceed with preparations for the special session. This will be discussed at the first substantive meeting of the Preparatory Committee in May, but we wish to emphasize that among the matters to be decided two are fundamental: first, the criteria regarding promoting and identifying new actions and initiatives and how best to move forward in compliance with the 10 Copenhagen commitments; and, secondly, the participation of civil society and non-governmental organizations at the special session. We are confident that these matters will be resolved by consensus.

Finally, it must be stressed that this Assembly has a responsibility to decide on the place and date for the special session, Copenhagen +5. In our opinion, these are decisions that require the maximum consensus, and they must be adopted on the basis of a single criterion: the place and date which will ensure its greatest success.

We believe that the Swiss Government's generous offer of Geneva as the location deserves serious consideration, *inter alia* because Geneva gives the possibility that Copenhagen +5 will have an impact that might be lacking at Headquarters in New York, where so many other events will take place in the year 2000. The nature of Geneva as an important United Nations centre is another factor that should be taken into account.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. I also wish to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports on this agenda item.

Three core issues were deliberated upon at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen: the enhancement of social integration, particularly of the more disadvantaged and marginalized groups; the alleviation and reduction of poverty; and the expansion of productive employment. The participating Governments committed themselves to implementing the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action for social development. Within two years the special session to review the implementation of those commitments will be held. We are happy to note that preparations have begun for the review, including the finalization of a world poverty report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). While not wishing to prejudge what the atmosphere will be like in the year 2000, my delegation sincerely hopes that the enthusiasm and optimism prevailing at Copenhagen will still be maintained at the special session. Malaysia pledges its full cooperation in ensuring the session's success.

The subject which we are deliberating upon today is of paramount importance not only to the developing countries, but also to the developed nations. The issues require continuous dialogue and cooperation. Three years after the Summit the implementation and follow-up to the commitments made in Copenhagen remain unsatisfactory. The human condition has barely improved in many parts of the world. Today there are more than 1.3 billion people still living in abject poverty, struggling to survive on less than a dollar a day. The global unemployment rate has not shown any sign of significant improvement. Indeed, unemployment may have been on the increase quite significantly in recent months, given the effects of economic slowdown, political turmoil and unprecedented natural disasters experienced by many developing countries.

Poverty is still pervasive in the developing countries. This grim situation has been further exacerbated by the unexpected financial crisis and the economic recession currently facing a number of these countries. Countries that until one year ago had progressed well, maintaining respectable rates of growth and instituting sound economic and social policies and programmes, are now seeing their hard-earned achievements undermined by devalued currencies, depleted capital markets, erosion of investor confidence and economic and social regression arising from unbridled market activities, including those of currency speculators. Those Governments are now increasingly hard pressed to meet their social obligations. Their capacity to fulfil their commitments to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, unfortunately, has been affected in many ways.

In view of the current situation, international solidarity and cooperation are most urgently required. The negative impact of globalization and market liberalization is being increasingly felt worldwide. The world may be teetering on the edge of a global recession. If no serious measures are taken by all concerned, we may even slide into a global depression. A serious effort has to be made, first, to review and restructure the international financial architecture and, secondly, to support the various commitments already made, through a greater flow of financial resources and development assistance. The relevant issues could be addressed appropriately in ongoing discussions at the United Nations and within the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as in the context of an international conference on financing for development. My delegation welcomes the discussions currently being held in Washington.

In order to achieve the goals of social development, of which the eradication of poverty is a central element, the international community has to work seriously towards ensuring that much needed resources can be channelled to the development efforts of the developing countries. The developed countries should make every effort to meet the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance.

The efforts of many developing countries, especially heavily indebted poor countries, in uplifting the quality of life of their peoples, are still largely hampered by their external debt burden. External debt servicing eats away at meagre resources which could otherwise be used to cater for urgent needs such as infrastructure development, basic services, education and health. Therefore, there is an urgent need for new financial flows to be channelled to debtor developing countries through concessional financial assistance and foreign investments.

Sound policies and strategies are needed to reduce poverty and create new, productive employment opportunities. This task can never be handled single-handedly by Governments alone. Non-governmental organizations and the private sector can make a positive contribution through partnership with Governments at

both the national and the international levels. Their efforts would indeed complement the efforts of Governments in meeting the necessary social responsibilities and obligations.

My delegation welcomes the efforts made by the Secretariat to ensure integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations international conferences in the area of social development. We note in particular the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, including the establishment of three thematic ad hoc inter-agency task forces, on basic social services for all, on full employment and sustainable livelihoods, and on an enabling environment for economic and social development. We also commend the Department for Economic and Social Affairs for its work in this area. My delegation looks forward to the General Assembly considering at this session the decisions taken by the Preparatory Committee for the special session during its organizational session last May. My delegation supports the recommendation of the Committee that the special session should reaffirm and not renegotiate the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, review implementation so far, and recommend concrete actions and further initiatives. We also support the decisions made on issues to be addressed at future sessions of the Preparatory Committee, in coordination with the Commission for Social Development, on the role of the United Nations system, the mobilization of voluntary resources and the participation of non-governmental organizations.

The General Assembly has deliberated on this agenda item at the last three sessions. Clearly, fulfilment of the Copenhagen commitments will not be an easy task. But it will be possible if political will and resources can be effectively combined, bringing together all concerned with a renewed sense of purpose and urgency. My delegation hopes to be able to make a useful contribution to the current and future consideration of this item.

Mr. Carranza Cifuentes (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): For the third year running, the General Assembly is considering this item, which is of special importance to my country because of the major contribution of this year's report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, and especially because of the work of intergovernmental bodies in anticipation of the convening of a special session of the General Assembly on this item in the year 2000.

The year 2000 special session will be convened to conduct a comprehensive study and evaluation of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit; in the view of my delegation, convening that session is the most important item that will be considered in the coming months. It is important because of the subject matter, which — like extreme poverty and the effects of globalization, among other issues — has a significant impact on developing countries.

We also welcome the decision of the Economic and Social Council to engage, in 1999, in a comprehensive consideration of the question of the eradication of poverty with a view to making a contribution to the special session.

The work in May 1998 of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives resulted in interesting proposals that will have to be considered in depth. In that connection, we take note of the proposal that the special session should take place at the United Nations Office at Geneva; this would give the special session the political impact needed to achieve the agreed goals with a view to intensifying efforts to achieve full and effective implementation of the outcome of the World Summit. We are optimistic about the proposal of the Government of Switzerland on economic assistance for developing countries requesting it so that those which cannot afford to go to Geneva will still be properly represented at the special session.

The conclusions adopted at the thirty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development on promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons, give rise to thought concerning the level of participation of various organizations, institutions and social groups that have not been sufficiently taken into account but that could work with great enthusiasm and loyalty on the social problems afflicting the nations of the world. Such popular participation could lead to the creation of the machinery needed to ensure that society itself is capable of achieving its social development goals and that the progress that is made will also be sustainable.

In Guatemala, the Government's policies to promote social development are aimed at combating extreme poverty. Directing public spending towards priority social sectors and geographical areas is necessary in order to

achieve the desired result. In this connection, the General Secretariat for Economic Planning, which is charged with supporting governmental action to combat extreme poverty, acts as the coordinator of the technical commissions charged with drawing up a proposal for interorganizational coordination enabling increasing investment in productive projects in the rural areas of our country.

Moreover, we have begun a process of coordination with the National Institute for Statistics and the Ministers of State to follow up the social policies established as part of the Plan for Social Development and Peace-building (PLADES) by identifying a series of social indicators and by formulating implementation mechanisms to guarantee reliable and timely information.

General drafting guidelines are necessary in order to present the Secretary-General with national reports on the implementation of the objectives and commitments entered into at the World Summit. It is also necessary to have a common framework for the presentation of these reports on the progress that has been made in the field and the obstacles that have been encountered along the way. These guidelines will help countries by giving them the technical assistance they need to present their reports in a uniform manner.

With regard to Guatemala itself, the collaboration of the United Nations system during the experimental stage of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework is an excellent opportunity to draw up joint country-by-country evaluations that the organs and institutions involved do on studies of sectoral support for the financing of basic social services. In this connection, my Government supports the Assistance Framework in actions to that end, actions which, among other things, attempt to raise the national capacity to collect and analyze data on the expenses associated with the 20/20 Initiative and to promote coordination within the United Nations system in the fight to eradicate poverty in general.

Furthermore, my delegation takes note with satisfaction of the annual report prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the *Social Panorama of Latin America 1997*. That report evaluates the most important aspects of social development in the region, especially those related to social equity. My delegation is convinced anew that the work being done by regional commissions plays an important role in regional evaluations of social issues.

Finally, given the growing participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission for Social Development, and bearing in mind that their participation ought to be directed in such a way that they make a significant contribution to the work of the Commission and that, among other things, these organizations help to make civil society more aware and sensitive to complementary activities through seminars, conferences and symposiums, it is necessary to draft rules and regulations that will govern their participation in the special session.

Even though we have a long way to go and the problems of poverty and social inequality persist, we must continue with our commitment to determine what further initiatives will be the most effective in advancing the goals set out in Copenhagen.

Mr. Nejad-Hosseinian (*Islamic Republic of Iran*): My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The World Summit for Social Development represents the actual advent of a continuing campaign at the global level towards a better common comprehension of the various elements involved in the social development of modern societies. The Summit, while underlining the significance of social development and human well-being for all, emphasized that our societies must respond more effectively to the material and spiritual needs of individuals, their families and their communities.

It is encouraging to note that the General Assembly decided to convene in the year 2000 a special session for the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit and established a Preparatory Committee to undertake and facilitate the organizational and substantive preparations for the session. We were active in the process leading to Copenhagen and in Copenhagen itself and are pleased to participate actively in and contribute to the preparatory process for the appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit. We are also encouraged by the deliberations of the Preparatory Committee in its organizational session to address organizational as well as substantive issues of the review session, particularly that the main purpose of the special session would be to reaffirm and not to renegotiate the outcome of the Summit.

We believe that the review conference should focus on the realistic assessment of the degree of implementation of the Copenhagen outcome, including the 10 commitments, with particular emphasis on the three core issues, at the national, regional and international levels.

We welcome and commend the role of the Commission for Social Development and its secretariat in the preparatory process, in which it has been designated to act as the forum for national reporting and for identifying areas for further initiatives. The priority themes for next session of the Commission will contribute to the preparatory process. We will await with keen interest the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the 10 commitments, including the three core issues, and the report of the world social situation due to be submitted to the Commission in the year 2000. As for the venue of the special session, my delegation takes note of the generous offer of the Government of Switzerland to host the special session in Geneva.

Let me now turn to some substantive issues which we consider to be of importance for the preparatory process and the special session. While we all are committed to carry out the outcome of the Summit at the national level, the question of genuine international cooperation is a serious matter and needs to be addressed in earnest. In this context, we all remember that one of the most important discussions during the World Summit for Social Development was the exploration of new and innovative resources of financing for poverty alleviation programmes and social development.

We believe that national efforts and resources will not suffice to permit the achievement of the goals of the Summit, particularly in the fields of eradication of poverty and creation of employment. With an eye to the consequences and negative impacts of the still unfolding processes of globalization and liberalization on the developing societies, the preparatory process for the review session should seek new and innovative approaches to these twin processes. The Agenda for Development and the notion of the right to development should be looked at in dealing with the concept of social development.

We all agree that the ultimate objective of social development is to help countries to establish a sound, stable and well-functioning social system. Therefore, we should take a new look at the notion of development. For us, development, as a process contributing to the progress and well-being of societies, should be in harmony and consistent with the nature of the human being and the culture and values of societies. In this context, we believe that paragraphs 28 and 29 of the Copenhagen Declaration constitute the theoretical basis and the umbrella for the commitments of the Declaration. We consider it important to underline that there is no universal method of promoting social integration and full participation and that cultural, ideological and philosophical diversity at the international level should be respected.

My delegation is pleased to note the role of values in the advancement of human societies. We firmly believe that values are important elements in shaping policies and attitudes and an enabling environment for social development in each society. In this connection, we emphasize that the ultimate objective of social development is to assist societies to develop a humane social structure and relations within their own cultural, ideological and philosophical parameters. We look forward to sharing these ideas with other delegations in the course of deliberations in the review process of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

In conclusion, I should like to assure you, Mr. President, of the commitment of my delegation to actively participate in and contribute to the two-year process of preparing for the special session on the appraisal and review of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration.

Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho): This statement is being made on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) — Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

At the outset, permit me, on behalf of these countries, to join previous speakers in commending Mr. Didier Opertti for the able manner in which he continues to preside over the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Our congratulations go also to other members of the Bureau. We wish to assure Mr. Opertti of the full cooperation of the SADC member States in the discharge of the heavy responsibility entrusted to him. Let me further take this opportunity to congratulate his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, the former Foreign Minister of Ukraine, for the able manner in which he guided the work of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

SADC would like to associate itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development" (A/53/211). We have also noted with appreciation the report of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives (A/53/45).

The Preparatory Committee held its organizational session here in New York in May this year. SADC is emphatic that the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action should not be renegotiated. We agree with the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee that the preparatory meetings need to ensure the participation of high-level Government officials, especially ministers, who would be in a position to propose key policy and practical recommendations for consideration by the Preparatory Committee.

SADC also welcomes the invitation by the Preparatory Committee to the Governments to contribute to the Trust Fund for the Follow-up to the World Summit set up to support the participation of the least developed countries in the work of the Preparatory Committee and the special session. Furthermore, we have also taken note with appreciation of the offer of the Government of Switzerland to host the special session in the year 2000. In this respect we also take note of the practical implications of the offer as contained in the Secretary-General's note (A/53/210). We therefore look forward to further consultations on this issue.

SADC is pleased to note that most Member States continue to report to the United Nations on measures taken at the national level to implement the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. However, we believe that further concrete measures need to be taken to facilitate the implementation of the Summit's goals.

We have to continue to address various issues of social development, particularly the three core issues: poverty eradication; the expansion of productive employment and the reduction of unemployment; and social integration. Above all, we have to build on what we achieved in Copenhagen. The success of the Copenhagen commitments requires the joint effort of Governments and of grass-roots and non-governmental organizations working in close partnership towards the same objectives. In this respect, SADC wishes to emphasize that in pursuing the Summit goals, all actors should base their initiatives on the cross-cutting themes of the global conferences: poverty eradication, gender mainstreaming, the enabling environment and human rights.

The SADC member States have expanded the provision of basic social services, particularly basic health and education facilities. They are striving to promote social integration by establishing country-wide administrative structures in order to achieve grass-roots participation and widen the decision-making base. But the economic reforms embraced by the SADC States have compelled Governments to reduce expenditures on these activities. As a result there is now a decrease in school enrolment, and the delivery of essential services to the poor has also been drastically affected, as have the health and food production sectors.

We met in Copenhagen impelled by the need to alleviate human suffering. There, we all heard the heartrending chronicles of facts and figures that depicted the wretchedness, poverty and marginalization of an unacceptably high percentage of the human race. In this generation, which has known and experienced unprecedented affluence, it is disquieting to live with the current high rate of the world's population mired in abject poverty. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the sources of conflict, armed or unarmed, have shifted towards economic, social and environmental issues, with more conflicts now arising within States than between or among them. In Africa, for example, we have a large number of intra-State conflicts that have their root cause in the scarcity of resources.

Eradication of poverty remains a priority goal for all developing countries and SADC is concerned that there continues to be a steady increase in the number of people living under unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in developing and the least developed countries. We consider it most unfortunate that women have to bear a disproportionate burden of poverty. Children and youth, older people, people with disabilities, indigenous people, refugees and displaced persons are also particularly vulnerable to poverty.

It is commonly known that poverty in most developing countries, particularly those in Africa, is aggravated by, among other things, falling terms of trade for commodities, high tariffs for their exports, lack of resources, lack of appropriate technology and,

particularly, these countries' heavy external debt burden. There is an urgent need to relieve these countries — particularly the 33 sub-Saharan countries classified among the least developed countries — of their debt burden. We do not believe that rescheduling external debt will provide the answer. Debt cancellation is the only solution and, in this regard, we appeal to the Bretton Woods institutions and the major Western creditors to accelerate debt forgiveness.

We commend the Secretary-General's report, particularly paragraph 52 (a), which places emphasis on the need for the World Bank to avoid weakening existing, positive social capital and suggests that the Bank identify institutions in need of strengthening. In the same paragraph, the Bank is encouraged to invest directly in social capital through training and assistance for the capacity-building of local organizations.

SADC acknowledges that globalization and liberalization can have certain advantages. We are concerned, however, that currently only the rich, who also happen to be the minority, benefit. We wish to reiterate that, for the globalization and liberalization of the world economy to benefit all, developing countries must have free and unconditional access to the world markets, without which the marginalization of the developing countries will continue unabated. There can be no equality between unequal partners. It is therefore unfair to assume equal leverage when the playing field is grossly uneven. We are indeed gratified that the United Nations Development Programme's 1998 *Human Development Report* has acknowledged this factor.

SADC agrees with the view, expressed by the Group of 77 and China in their statement, that the recent financial crisis that has wrought havoc in Asia and reverberated throughout the world clearly illustrates the need for controls on financial markets and effective oversight.

Productive work and employment are the central elements of development. Full and appropriately remunerated employment is an effective method of combating poverty and promoting social integration. However, much unremunerated productive work — such as caring for children and the elderly, producing and preparing food for the family, protecting the environment and providing voluntary assistance to vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and groups — is of great social importance. Thus, such work, although unremunerated, should be fully accorded the recognition it deserves, first and foremost by the communities and individuals who are the direct beneficiaries of the services rendered.

The priority theme for the thirty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development was "Promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons". The Commission unanimously agreed that social integration is best promoted in close harmony with efforts to expand productive employment and eradicate poverty, given their mutually reinforcing interrelationships. In this respect, allow me to share information on some of the efforts that SADC has taken to improve the human development goals of the people in our region. These efforts were focused on poverty alleviation, employment expansion and social integration.

First, in order to underline the importance the Community attaches to providing equal opportunities to its citizens, and in particular to the women within the Community, the SADC heads of State or Government, at their summit in Blantyre, Malawi, in September 1997, adopted a declaration on gender and development.

Secondly, SADC adopted a statement and a Plan of Action on HIV/AIDS for the Community and a policy on HIV/AIDS and employment.

Thirdly, SADC is developing a regional programme for demining to reinforce efforts being made at the national level. Hence, at the Blantyre summit in September 1997, the Community also adopted a declaration on anti-personnel landmines, entitled "Towards a Southern Africa Free of Anti-Personnel Landmines".

Fourthly, in order to promote regional integration, SADC is making steady progress in the establishment of a single economic space which will give the region more bargaining power in the global economy.

Fifthly, SADC is also proceeding with its regional integration and community-building programme, formally launched in 1993. To date, seven protocols have been concluded and signed in a number of areas. They include promoting the harmonization of national energy policies and the balanced, sustainable and equitable utilization of the region's energy resources. They also include shared watercourse systems to promote sound and sustainable development and management of international waters for the mutual benefit of all the riparian States. A water

sector has also been established to underscore the importance SADC attaches to the region's water resources.

Also included are transport, communications and meteorology to promote the harmonization of national transport policies and the cost-efficient management and operation of the region's transport and communications network, in order to support trade and investment in the region. Another area is combating illicit drug-trafficking through promoting a joint regional effort in combating the scourge of illicit drugs and preventing the use of southern Africa as a conduit for trafficking in illicit drugs destined for countries outside the southern African region. And, finally, these protocols include promoting intraregional and international trade.

The protocols have been signed and are in the process of being ratified by the SADC member States. Work is in progress to conclude protocols in other areas of cooperation. Notable among these is the food, agriculture and natural resources sector, for which a regional food security strategy and framework have been agreed upon. The strategy and framework underline poverty alleviation as a prime concern, and in particular address the issue of improving access to food, availability of food and food nutrition.

SADC welcomes the outcome of the first ministerial-level global meeting on youth, held in Lisbon, Portugal, from 8 to 12 August this year and hosted by the Government of Portugal in cooperation with the United Nations. We are encouraged that more than 160 States committed their Governments to placing national youth policy formulation, implementation, follow-up processes and funding at the highest political level. We call upon all Governments to translate their commitments into concrete actions in such areas as youth participation, development, peace, education and employment.

Let me take this opportunity to urge the relevant United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, international financial institutions and bilateral donors to continue promoting international awareness of the importance of the programme of the Social Summit and to mobilize the resources necessary to assist the SADC member States in building their capacity for carrying out their programmes. In this regard, the mandate of the Commission on Sustainable Development has to be broadened and strengthened in order to monitor the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

In conclusion, SADC wants to add a word of caution: Poverty transcends boundaries and knows no immigration laws. Social disintegration cannot be indefinitely confined to ghettos or national borders. We appeal to the developed nations to render assistance to the developing countries and to enhance our regional endeavours in the provision of basic infrastructure and the requisite services. We believe that social development will be meaningful and durable if our collective efforts, from all spheres of society, are harnessed to achieve that goal. Let us not allow the lofty goals of the Social Summit to become meaningless promises to the world's poor and needy. In the view of SADC, Copenhagen must be the beginning and not the end.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The World Summit for Social Development provided an invaluable opportunity to focus international attention on the core issues of poverty, unemployment and social integration. The Copenhagen Summit demonstrated that social development is indeed a question of global concern; therefore, the implementation of its decisions naturally acquires special significance.

In the three years since the Social Summit, there have been encouraging signs of progress in fulfilling the commitments taken by Governments at the Summit and in creating the conditions for reducing poverty and unemployment and encouraging comprehensive social integration. At both national and international levels, there have been many encouraging examples of both policy formulations and concrete actions reflecting a stronger commitment by Member States to social development.

My delegation welcomes the results of the special session of the Economic and Social Council devoted to the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits, as well as the work of the Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly, concerning the implementation of the outcome of the Summit. Likewise, we welcome the established practice of holding panel discussions on the priority issues as an important and innovative input in the deliberations.

More concretely, my delegation sees great value in the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination to organically integrate the internationally agreed programmes into national policies and actions. It also highly evaluates the work of the Commission for Social Development and the newly created Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Mongolia, like many other countries undergoing fundamental changes, has been grappling with the challenges of transition for the past seven and a half years. Market reforms have been boldly accelerated by liberalization of trade and prices, large-scale privatization and other economic measures. However, the reform process has not been without difficulties. The inherited burdens of a weak financial system and inefficient State enterprises, coupled with a lack of free market traditions, have compounded the reform challenge.

To adequately address the above problems, the Government of Mongolia has been taking a host of measures designed to reduce poverty and unemployment and improve the living standards of the most vulnerable segments of the society. Thus, in June 1994, it launched a six-year multisectoral National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NPAP), aimed at effective mobilization and utilization of both national and external resources to reduce the portion of the population living in poverty to less than 10 per cent by the year 2000. This would be done, *inter alia*, by the revival of the national economy, promotion of productive employment, creation of jobs, improvements in health and education and the advancement of women as full partners in development.

Allow me to speak briefly about the implementation of the NPAP, which started in late 1994 with 65 pilot projects in selected provinces and districts. The projects include the build-up of institutional framework, both at the local and national levels; creation of fund mechanisms; establishment of project formulation, appraisal, selection and implementation procedures; adoption of operational guidelines; training of personnel; and so on.

The nationwide implementation of NPAP was launched in March 1996. By June of this year, six cycles of projects, each requiring an implementation period of three to four months, had been completed. The NPAP activities undertaken within and outside the Poverty Alleviation Fund mechanisms include the following: public works projects to develop and strengthen local infrastructure providing short-term employment to the unemployed and the poor; basic education projects to substantially reduce school dropout and non-enrolment rates as well as to renovate school buildings and school heating systems in rural areas; rural health projects to help the rural health services restore and maintain their ability to provide primary health care; pre-school strengthening projects to improve the quality of and access to pre-school education by improving the developmental and cognitive skills of school entrants; and support projects for the disabled to create wider employment opportunities for them by supplying training equipment and learning materials to the institutions engaged in their training and education.

United Nations agencies play an active role in the implementation of NPAP. From the very inception of the NPAP, the United Nations Development Programme has been assisting the Government in resource mobilization and in adopting a coordinated approach by the United Nations system and the donor community to poverty alleviation in Mongolia.

The United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization support our policy of improving reproductive and primary health care, immunization, safe motherhood, control of meningitis and respiratory infections, improvement of education and so forth. I would like to note that the United Nations Volunteers also play an important role in NPAP activities.

It should be pointed out that the United Nations system's operational activities have been consistent with our country's needs and our Government's priorities. The assistance and support programmes of the United Nations system have been drawn up in full collaboration with the Government and have focused on the areas where its comparative advantage is most effective and feasible.

The NPAP is being implemented in close coordination with the Mongolian Action Programme for the Twenty-First Century, the Population Policy of Mongolia and the National Programme of Action for the Advancement of Women, all of which have been adopted as follow-up measures to the Rio, Cairo and Beijing conferences. In is also being implemented in coordination with the National Employment Generation Programme of 1996.

My delegation is happy to announce that the Government of Mongolia is launching, in close partnership with the United Nations family bodies

stationed in Mongolia and with non-governmental organizations, a One World Conference Series project, aimed at ensuring a national and international integrated follow-up to the world conferences and summits held in the early 1990s.

To commemorate this year as "the year of the youth", the Government of Mongolia and the United Nations system agreed on five areas of cooperation on critical youth issues. This innovative process, and the resulting memorandum of understanding agreement, will, we hope, positively affect the nation's youth situation in the next millennium.

In order to celebrate the International Year of Older Persons next year, the Mongolian Government recently established a National Preparatory Committee for celebration of the Year and will launch a series of supportive activities.

The current decline in official development assistance and in contributions to the United Nations core resources is a matter of concern for Mongolia, as it is for other Member States. As a developing landlocked country with weak financial resources, at present Mongolia relies to some extent on external resources for development. My delegation welcomes the cost-sharing practices in the United Nations system's operational activities and would like to re-emphasize the need to increase core resources on a predictable, continuous and assured basis. It also favours increased non-core and earmarked funding, as well as the mobilization of private sector support.

In conclusion, may I express my delegation's sincere hope that the ongoing deliberations on the implementation of the outcome of the Social Summit will help to generate renewed political will at the national and international levels to attain the noble objectives of ensuring sustainable human development.

Mr. Babaa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like to express my support for all the points made by the representative of Indonesia, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, in which he discussed the problems of the developing countries, the challenges they face, and various matters relating to economic and social development, in particular the importance of reactivating the North-South and South-South dialogues and the need for North-South and South-South cooperation as a way of promoting participation in the attainment of the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development. I should also like to add one or two remarks of my own.

The outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, reflected the interest of the international community in human development. Humanity is both the axis and the end of development. The outcome emphasized that the achievement of social development in any society requires the eradication of poverty, the creation of employment opportunities, the reduction of unemployment, and attainment of social integration for the good of the individual, and for the creation of opportunity to participate in development and decision-making.

Despite the efforts that have been and are still being made by the developing countries to achieve the objectives set out in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action, the actual progress achieved remains minimal. The poor are getting poorer. More than a billion people are living in extreme poverty, especially in Africa, which has the largest number of the poor. Most of these are suffering from unemployment, underdevelopment, social injustice and a lack of the most elementary health and education services, food, drinking water and housing. This is true despite the fact that it has been three years since the Copenhagen Programme of Action was adopted.

The developing countries have a special and urgent responsibility to confront the monopolies whose imposition is fostered under the name of globalization and its slogans: The transformation of their industries and financial institutions into satellite industries and institutions and the imposition of controls over their raw materials with regard to production, distribution, and pricing. This has all greatly harmed these countries, and the damage will be even greater if they do not adopt adequate formulas for eradicating the negative effects of globalization and for a fundamental review of the Bretton Woods institutions. Such a review should be an element of these requisite formulas.

Whereas we recognize that the primary responsibility for social development falls to the States themselves, the existence of a just and appropriate international economic, social and political environment is a fundamental condition for the promotion of international cooperation to consolidate the efforts of the developing countries in the sphere of their own social development. This will require the developed countries, the international financial institutions and the United

Nations development agencies to fulfil the commitments which they undertook at the Copenhagen Summit. Such compliance includes the provision of adequate financial resources and the necessary development assistance for development plans and programmes in the developing countries, aimed at eliminating poverty and unemployment and at supporting social integration, while providing for food, security and the evolution of education and health services.

In view of the close linkages between economic and social development, the deterioration of the economic situation of many developing countries has negatively affected their social development. The continuation of Africa's critical economic situation and debt burden requires the international community to affirm its commitment to resolving the problems of that African continent, to finding radical solutions to its debt problem, and to helping its economies to diversify and to gain access to the markets of the developed countries. They must also be provided with the financial resources necessary to enhance their development and to market their exports at equitable and just prices.

In this regard, my delegation wishes to affirm the need for the current reform process in the United Nations to deal with the Organization's capacity to address the issues of development in the developing countries and to enable them effectively to meet their needs and to finance their development programmes. Here, I would refer in particular to the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Human and economic development requires peace and justice. Peace calls for a level of development that provides the citizen with his basic needs. Measures of economic coercion, which some developed countries impose on some developing countries with a view to exerting political and economic pressure on them, as well as attempts to impose their national legislation extraterritorially run counter to the principles of development and peace. This requires the entire international community to take effective measures to eliminate such measures.

On the basis of my country's full commitment to the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, we have adopted a number of economic and social measures and policies aimed at guaranteeing the optimum use of our human resources and improving the economic and social conditions of all members of society under the umbrella of legislative and legal guarantees that take account of the need for balance between the interests of the individual and of society. These measures also include the promotion of human rights in the Jamahiriya society based upon full participation in decision-making. The development plans of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya place priority on the development of programmes of education, training, free health services, and social security given free of charge to widows, the elderly, the disabled and the needy.

However, the progress achieved by my country in the area of human development faces a serious setback due to the coercive measures and the sanctions unjustly imposed on the Libyan Arab people. Their negative effects have extended to impeding development programmes and plans intended to improve the infrastructures of the country. This constitutes a blatant violation of the right to development and of all human rights guaranteed by international instruments, and a flagrant violation of the provision of human rights covenants.

In conclusion, my delegation supports the holding of a special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 to undertake a comprehensive review and evaluation of the outcome of the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development. This offers an opportunity to further the objectives of the conference while evaluating progress achieved in the implementation of its Programme of Action, and to adopt further initiatives aiming at the formulation of a long-range strategy at the national, regional and international levels to promote human development. We hope that the Preparatory Committee for that special session will be able to prepare well for it in terms of organization and content. We would also like to reaffirm our delegation's cooperation with that Committee in order to enable it to accomplish its task in the best possible manner.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First of all I would like to say that my delegation is happy to share the views put forward by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

More than three years have passed since the World Summit for Social Development, which consolidated recognition of the fact that the individual is the subject and the end of all development policies and strategies at the national and global levels. There is now international recognition of the urgent need to resolve such serious problems as poverty, unemployment and social marginalization which still prevail in the world.

Nevertheless, this important world event was only the beginning of a long and difficult path which is becoming increasingly complex because of the inevitable and unstoppable phenomenon of globalization which, combined with the delicate state of the world economy at this end of century, threatens the world with a global economic crisis with incalculable consequences and which is already hitting several developing countries and millions of people around the world.

The progress of this neo-liberal globalization which some are trying to impose on the world goes hand in hand with growth in poverty and social polarization. It is undeniable that in the 1990s there has been an unprecedented widening of the huge gap between the rich and the poor. There has been a disturbing increase in levels of unemployment and social disintegration, postponing increasingly the attainment of the noble goals of social justice included in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

On the threshold the new millennium, more than 1,313 million people live today below the poverty line. Of those, 80 per cent live in countries of the developing world. Eighty per cent of worldwide production is concentrated in the countries with developed economies, where only 16 per cent of the world population live, while more than 84 per cent of the world population live in the developing countries.

About 30 per cent of the population of developing countries, 1,300 million people, do not have access to drinking water. In the developing countries the infant mortality rate up to the age of five exceeds 100 per 1,000 live births, and 89 per 1,000 live births up to the age of one. Life expectancy at birth in developing countries fluctuates between 50 and 60 years. About 600 million persons will not survive to age 40 in 1998. 1,450 million adults are illiterate. Thus, there are innumerable challenges and obstacles as we strive to achieve social development, and the international community must make every effort to advance towards a world with economic, political and social stability.

Globalization will not be viable if it continues to pursue the narrow aims of a small number of industrialized countries, multinational corporations and international institutions controlled by them. The persistence and seriousness of a large number of economic, social and environmental problems make it necessary to promote an awareness of the desirability of transforming international relations with a view to creating a new kind of cooperation as the only way to solve the burning problems afflicting the overwhelming majority of the world population and to make our world a stable and liveable place.

Special mention should be made of the difficult situation relating to the international mobilization of resources for development. This can only be viewed as an integral process between the economic and social areas. Official development assistance has declined over the past five years, according to World Bank figures. Not only has the dollar gone down in value, but many developed donor countries continue to give less than the goal of 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product, while that same group of countries designates approximately 3 per cent for military expenditures, which is inconceivable in the light of the so-called end of the cold war.

Official assistance can and must be supplemented by other ways of mobilizing resources and by specific structural changes in the developing economies. However, this assistance, together with changes in the present international order, must continue to be fundamental components of the strategy to achieve development.

The external debt burden continues to stifle a significant number of developing countries. The proposed relief measures in many cases are accompanied by the imposition of reform programmes and structural adjustments whose negative effects on the people of the debtor countries have contributed to creating explosive social situations in some of these countries.

The African countries continue to require special attention, including those in the group of the least developed countries. For this group of nations, recent developments have been significantly negative.

The political will of States continues to be the key to the resolution of the complex and distressing panorama before us. The resources to resolve these problems exist, but they are wasted in unbridled prosperity and in the arms race. If we do not build an international environment which allows for economic growth and sustained development, it will be almost impossible, particularly for the great majority of the countries of the third world, to progress without interruption along the path of social development.

Allow me to express appreciation for the outcome of our efforts to coordinate the follow-up to the Copenhagen

Summit, as well as our hope to achieve even greater things in the future.

Cuba is honoured to welcome the outcome of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly to be devoted to reviewing, five years later, the commitments assumed at the World Social Summit in Copenhagen.

In the last 40 years, Cuba has planned out and put into practice, with significant results, development policies and strategies based on a more just and equitable distribution of wealth.

In that way, we have achieved the following: 100 per cent of the population has access to health services and free education; life expectancy at birth is now 74.7 years; the infant mortality rate is now only 7.2 per 1,000 births; 100 per cent of Cuban children are protected by vaccinations against 11 preventable diseases; we have one doctor for every 176 inhabitants of the island; and 97.4 per cent of children between the ages of 6 and 14 go to school. These are just a few of the indicators that could be mentioned.

In spite of my country's difficult economic situation, which has been aggravated by the tightening of the illegal economic commercial and financial blockade imposed by the Government of the United States and repeatedly rejected by the General Assembly, Cuba continues to pursue a programme of economic and social development aimed at improving the well-being of the people, a programme characterized by the most profound humanitarian feeling. This has been possible, above all, because we have never abandoned what are, for Cuba, the pillars of our social and economic development — namely, our independence and sovereignty — and because all the efforts of the past 40 years have been focused on human beings and the enhancement of their dignity.

The fact that we have preserved the most important social benefits achieved over decades, under circumstances that are so abnormal and complex, underscores the idea that within a framework of social justice and equitable distribution of wealth, it is possible to meet certain basic social development goals in situations of scant economic growth and even decline. The infrastructure created during the past decades, the implementation of policies of applied social protection, creativity and the participation of the people in this effort have allowed Cuba not only to preserve the principal social successes we have achieved but even to enhance them in many cases.

It will be the my country's great privilege and honour to host the South Summit to be held in the year 2000, an event that arises out of the urgent need for all of the developing countries to prepare jointly to face the challenges of the new millennium and to endeavour to ward off the cruel reality that is advancing on humanity, in which backwardness and poverty, unhealthy conditions, hunger and illness are constantly gaining ground from well-being and the full realization of humanity's potential.

As ever, Cuba is prepared to share its experiences and participate actively in whatever efforts are made by the international community to bring about the implementation of the commitments undertaken at the Copenhagen Summit and to move towards a world of true social justice for all.

Mr. Babar (Pakistan): At the outset, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

My delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his reports on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. We also welcome the various initiatives of Governments and non-governmental organizations to achieve the goals of the Social Summit.

One of the major achievements of the Copenhagen Summit was the recognition of human beings as the main actors and beneficiaries of the development process. It was realized that people should be given opportunities to participate fully in development activities and to receive a fair distribution of their fruits. However, despite concerted efforts over the last three years, the goals of social development envisaged in Copenhagen largely remain unimplemented. The situation has been further exacerbated by the downturn of the global economy, resulting in an increase in unemployment, particularly in the developing countries.

Unemployment and poverty, both human and economic, are the major challenges confronting the developing countries. Unemployment and underdevelopment generate social unrest and undermine cohesion and stability. Unemployment in many cases is a major cause of political instability in various parts of the world. The International Labour Organization has estimated that approximately 1 billion people -- about 30 per cent of the entire global labour force — are either unemployed or underemployed. It should be our

collective endeavour to draw upon this enormous human resource and benefit from these people's contribution to development.

Poverty generates deprivation. It reflects denial of choices and opportunities. The 1998 report of the United Nations Development Programme has estimated that approximately 1.3 billion people — almost a quarter of world's population — live below the poverty line of one dollar a day; well over 1 billion people are deprived of basic consumption needs; out of 4.4 billion people living in developing countries, approximately three fifths lack basic sanitation; one third have no access to clean water; one quarter do not have adequate housing; one fifth do not have enough dietary energy and protein; over 1.94 billion are anaemic; and one fifth have no access to modern medical services.

The recent South-East Asian economic crisis threatens to push more than 50 million people into poverty in one country alone. The social costs of one-dimensional globalization are too high for the developing countries. This calls for urgent action by the international community.

The prevalence of social unrest, violence and armed conflicts in various parts of the world have also added to the economic deprivation and the deepening of poverty and social disintegration of societies. South Asia is one such region, where continued conflicts and tensions remain a major cause of poverty and economic backwardness.

We hope that the Preparatory Committee for the special session, which started its work in May of this year, will undertake a detailed evaluation of the world social situation. We also hope that it will give special consideration to the core problems of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion for inclusion in the priority themes of the special session. The Preparatory Committee also needs to consider the impact of globalization and the stabilization of the financial markets, as they directly affect developing countries' endeavours for achieving sustained economic growth and social development.

Pakistan has taken a number of policy initiatives to implement its Copenhagen commitments. To create a conducive economic environment, we have accelerated our economic liberalization programme by introducing reforms in the corporate, banking and financial sectors. Maximum tariff rates have been reduced; most import restrictions have been withdrawn. Investors, both Pakistani and foreign, can now invest in Pakistan without governmental approval, except in a few specified areas.

We believe that transparency in governance constitutes a prerequisite for the creation of a suitable economic environment. Pakistan has accordingly established an Independent Accountability Commission, headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court, to deal with corrupt elements in the highest echelons of authority and to ensure probity in public life. This has helped in efforts to eradicate corruption from public life to make the governance fully accountable. Recently, a freedom of information law has also been enforced to ensure that information on governance becomes available to all segments of society so as to encourage participatory and transparent governance. Efforts are also under way to establish an environmental protection authority to ensure compliance with national environmental quality standards.

As a modest effort to tackle the twin menaces of poverty and unemployment, Pakistan has launched a five-year Social Action Programme, with an outlay of 500 billion rupees. The main focus of this programme will be on poverty alleviation, education, primary health care, population welfare, rural water supply and sanitation programmes. Employment generation, environmental protection, the empowerment of women, the decentralization of management and enhancing community participation have also been included in the framework of the Social Action Programme.

Pakistan also plans to generate 5.72 million additional employment opportunities through its eighth five-year plan encouraging private investment in labour-intensive industry and expanding agriculture and informal sectors. The focus on employment generation will also continue in the next five-year plan.

Pakistan believes that no society can achieve the objective of true development without the full and equal participation of women. The Constitution of Pakistan ensures equal opportunities and equal rights for all citizens without any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, religion or gender. Pakistan has already ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Various legislative, judicial and administrative processes have been initiated to bring the laws into conformity with the provisions of the Convention. The Women's Commission of Inquiry, which was headed by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court, has already submitted its findings to the Government to expedite this process. To bridge the

existing disparity in the job market, the Government has decided to give preference to women candidates in all future recruitment under the Social Action Programme.

Pakistan has also taken steps to eliminate all forms of child labour. A National Commission on Child Welfare and Development has been created in the Ministry of Social Welfare. The Commission formulates policies and coordinates activities of provincial institutions working for the welfare and development of the child. The 1995 Compulsory Education Act has been enforced in the Punjab province. Other provinces are formulating similar laws. The by-laws under the 1991 Employment of the Child Act have been finalized and are being enforced effectively. A Child Offenders Act, which provides for the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents and bans the death penalty for young offenders, is already in the process of being enacted.

As its modest contribution to the development of Africa and the least developed countries, Pakistan has an ongoing Africa Technical Assistance Programme. Under this programme, Pakistan provides technical assistance in the form of training courses, donations and expert services to least developed countries in various fields. Pakistan also offers scholarships in medicine, engineering and dentistry to students from least developed countries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is providing training facilities to professionals from African countries in the field of language and diplomacy.

The steady decline in external aid creates enormous difficulties for developing countries to sustain their efforts pursuant to the objectives of the Social Summit. Pakistan, as a developing country, is no exception to this rule. We hope that developed countries will honour their commitments by earmarking 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance. This would go a long way towards realizing the goals we agreed upon in Copenhagen.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations A/53/PV.31

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

31st plenary meeting
Wednesday, 7 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 99

Commemorative meeting of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): This commemorative meeting of the General Assembly is being held in accordance with the decision adopted at its 3rd plenary meeting on 15 September 1998 and pursuant to resolution 52/205 of 18 December 1997.

I would request that during this meeting of the Assembly we strive to be as brief and concise in our statements as possible, in view of the value that we attach to our time.

We are meeting here today to commemorate a key event in the history of international cooperation for development. The United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, held in Buenos Aires from 30 August to 12 September 1978, was a milestone in the United Nations system's ongoing efforts to promote international cooperation for development, which, as we all know, is one of the primary objectives of the Organization. The Conference adopted the Buenos Aires Plan of Action as a normative framework designed to improve the structure of international relations by placing greater emphasis on the use of the increasing technical and scientific capacities of developing countries in the promotion of socio-economic development in the South.

As the ultimate goal of technical cooperation among developing countries, the Plan establishes, on the one hand, the promotion of national and collective self-reliance among developing countries, and, on the other hand, the fostering of global partnership. Accordingly, for the past 20 years the Buenos Aires Plan of Action has provided a policy framework to enable developing countries to enhance their self-reliance by harnessing and exploiting their own capacities.

To underscore the continued importance of international partnership, the Plan emphasizes that its new proposals are complementary to, not a substitute for, traditional forms of North-South development cooperation. Although it assigns primary responsibility to developing countries for organizing, managing and financing technical cooperation among themselves, the Plan also calls upon the United Nations development system to play a catalytic and promotional role in advancing this cooperation.

The Plan sets forth a number of goals that require developing countries to enhance their creative capacities; share their human and technical resources; upgrade the quality and scope of international cooperation; and expand and refine communications among themselves on the national, subregional, regional and interregional levels.

98-86012 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The continuing validity of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action has been repeatedly reaffirmed by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the conferences and governing bodies of many specialized agencies. In particular, General Assembly resolution 46/159 indicates that technical cooperation among developing countries remains a key element in global economic cooperation. In resolution 48/172, the Assembly went further by urging Member States, the United Nations Development Programme and other organizations of the United Nations development system to give high priority and full support to technical cooperation among developing countries.

Since the 1970s, developing countries have increasingly used the technical cooperation framework to strengthen the bonds of cooperation among themselves in the context of formal subregional and regional integration arrangements and through more flexible cooperative exchanges. The developing countries have also sought to promote genuine partnership among themselves on the understanding that each country has resources and capacities that it can share and offer, as well as needs that may be satisfied by others. Many countries have taken the initiative of establishing well-defined policies and appropriate institutional arrangements in order to ensure a coordinated approach and to find common solutions to common problems within the framework of technical cooperation among developing countries. In the wake of recent trends towards globalization, technical cooperation among developing countries is increasingly being recognized as an important instrument for enabling countries of the South to participate effectively in the emerging new world order. This is all the more true given the well-known trend among the industrialized countries to reduce official development assistance, in particular as regards the allocation of funds to multilateral programmes and agencies.

In order that the full potential of technical cooperation among developing countries may be realized and to fulfil the expectations raised 20 years ago by the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, all Member States, developed and developing alike, must seize the current momentum and build upon the past achievements in technical cooperation among developing countries. This will require tireless efforts to make the potential of technical cooperation among developing countries widely understood, to strengthen the effectiveness of normative frameworks, procedures and focal points for technical cooperation among developing countries on the national level, and to promote information-sharing among developing countries at the subregional, regional, interregional and global levels. It will also require the international community to be more forthcoming with financing for activities undertaken within the context of technical cooperation among developing countries.

Thus, this commemorative meeting is an opportune moment for the international community to renew the political will necessary to overcome the factors hindering the optimal utilization of the existing capacities and resources and to accelerate development throughout the developing world. Given the prevailing mix of opportunities and challenges presented by globalization, the potential of such exchanges needs to be fully exploited. The promising prospects of increased trade and investment opportunities in the South are discernible in the current demographic projections, which indicate that, by the year 2025, nearly 7 billion of the projected world population of 8.5 billion people will live in the South — 7 out of 8.5 billion. This suggests that there is tremendous scope for the South to capitalize on increased market and investment opportunities.

In conclusion, responding to the recommendations of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action in the new context of globalization — an issue to which this Assembly has been paying particular attention — requires developed and developing countries to work cooperatively to devise new and improved approaches both for national institutions and on the global scale, so as to promote public and private enterprise, actions by economic players and by States themselves, in order to achieve the lofty objective of technical cooperation among developing countries.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: We are gathered here to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, in keeping with the General Assembly resolution adopted to that effect last year. Over these two decades, the international community has taken seriously the recommendations contained in the Plan of Action. Against the background of growing disparities between rich and poor countries, the Plan was designed to provide a road map for narrowing that gap.

The Plan urged all partners involved in international development cooperation to bring South-South solutions to shared development challenges by increasing the use of the human capacities and material resources that exist in the South.

South-South cooperation has enjoyed official recognition in the United Nations since the Buenos Aires Conference in 1978. It encompasses two types of partnership: technical cooperation among developing countries and economic cooperation among developing countries. The two interrelated approaches are intended to enable the South to promote collective self-reliance and to participate effectively in the international economic system.

Since the 1970s the benefits of South-South cooperation have been most manifest in the formation of regional groupings across the South. Through regional integration, many countries have expanded their market size, accelerated the pace of industrialization and laid the foundation for a more systematic integration of production structures across national boundaries. While some of these integration schemes have stagnated, many have made steady progress and gained vitality and momentum during the 1980s and 1990s.

The profound changes that have occurred in the international system since the late 1980s have had an equally profound impact on multilateral development cooperation. They have established a new context and a new rationale for promoting technical cooperation and South-South cooperation in general. These developments have underscored the futility of unilateral action in an interdependent world.

Since the 1970s the United Nations has played an important role in promoting technical cooperation. It has provided guidance on policies and procedures. It has supported institutional capacity-building, networking and information systems. Many United Nations organizations and agencies, including regional commissions, have actively promoted policies that place great emphasis on South-South cooperation.

In the area of capacity-building, UNDP has provided support to the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Central American Common Market and commodity groups such as the Union of Banana-Exporting Countries in efforts to strengthen their overall capacity. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) have provided similar assistance to various regional groupings in the development of national and regional institutions of developing countries in keeping with their respective mandates and expertise.

With support from the United Nations organizations and agencies, improved networking and twinning arrangements have become a significant feature of technical cooperation in recent years. UNESCO has supported educational networks in the Caribbean and fostered exchanges among various scientific organizations worldwide. The ILO has facilitated exchanges among various centres of excellence in the field of labour administration. Using networks to foster food security, FAO has been instrumental in the creation of the Biogas Network in Latin America and has supported the establishment of food crops networks. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has supported a trade information network linking a number of Asian countries in addition to sponsoring the Global Trade Point Network, which applies modern information technology to trade promotion.

Many developed countries have been very supportive of technical cooperation activities initiated by groups of developing countries. Japan, Ireland and South Korea have contributed generously to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation, established in 1995 by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme. Brazil and Chile have set up special funds to assist other developing countries in Latin America within the framework of TCDC. In light of the declining trend in official development assistance, as well as in core resources available to UNDP and other United Nations agencies, increased contributions to the Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation are needed.

The unprecedented changes which have occurred in the international economic system since the 1980s — principally the globalization of markets and production structures — make South-South cooperation more valid and relevant than ever as an instrument for helping developing countries to participate effectively in the emerging economic order.

Several challenges lie ahead. First, despite the accelerated differentiation in socio-economic performance among developing countries, we must recognize that the countries of the South still share a number of basic development needs. These include the need for external capital and development assistance; for access to export

markets and foreign exchange; for technologies; and for an external economic environment that is fair, predictable and stable.

Secondly, these shared needs establish a new rationale for South-South cooperation. It is one that requires developing countries to pool their human and material resources and to work collectively for a more just, equitable and democratic world system. If the countries of the South are to be masters of their destiny, they need to have an effective voice in all international forums.

Thirdly, given the complex mix of opportunities and challenges presented by globalization, the United Nations system and the international community as a whole must adjust to the demands of the new development context and redouble their efforts in support of technical and economic cooperation.

Fourthly, all organizations and agencies of the United Nations system must implement Economic and Social Council resolution 1992/41. They must ensure that technical and economic cooperation are given first consideration in the design, formulation, implementation and evaluation of their operational activities. The United Nations family should also increase the allocation of resources for technical and economic cooperation from their regular programme budgets. United Nations organizations and agencies should find opportunities to promote joint cooperative arrangements and bring their various sectoral competencies to bear on South-South cooperation activities. Regional Commissions should play an active role in promoting and supporting intra- and interregional activities of strategic importance to subregional and regional groupings.

This meeting, on the eve of the new millennium, provides an opportune moment for the international community to reflect upon the resources, strategies and partnerships that developing countries need to seize the opportunities our globalizing world presents.

In this era of dwindling resources for development, it is critically important to build new partnerships to draw on mutual knowledge and capacities. United Nations organizations and agencies should strengthen contacts with organizations in the developing world and help foster effective participation of the private sector in technical and economic cooperation activities. And I urge all countries to contribute to the Voluntary Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation.

Renewed efforts to advance the goals of South-South cooperation call for a coordinated approach among the entire United Nations family. This session of the General Assembly will be considering a revised version of the guidelines for the review of policies and procedures concerning technical cooperation and the Secretary-General's report on strengthening the integration of technical and economic cooperation approaches to development.

I encourage all members of the United Nations family to include a South-South dimension in their operational activities in keeping with the guidelines once they are endorsed.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I remind representatives that this meeting is exclusively devoted to the commemoration of an important anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. It is not a regular working meeting to consider in depth the question of South-South technical cooperation. I therefore urge all speakers to manage their time in the most cooperative way possible.

I call first on the representative of Nigeria, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Akunwafor (Nigeria): It is my honour and privilege to make the following statement on behalf of the Group of African States at the United Nations.

Please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your recent well-deserved election to the presidency of our General Assembly at its fifty-third session. In Nigeria, my country, and Africa, my continent and region, we have no doubt that the conduct of the Assembly's affairs will benefit a great deal from your experience and wisdom.

Granted that all African States are members of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Group of 77, whose original idea it was to establish the mechanism for promoting technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC), my brief remarks this morning would not be properly rooted should we fail to recall that Africa's love for and faith in the necessity and potential of TCDC date back to 1977, one year ahead of the birth of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. Meeting at its twenty-ninth ordinary session in Libreville, Gabon, in July 1977, the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) first recognized that

"TCDC is a historical imperative brought about by the need for a new international order" [and] "a conscious, systematic and politically motivated process developed to create a framework of multiple links between developing countries".

Within the same July 1977, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU endorsed the Ministers' recommendations, which were again reaffirmed by the OAU Council of Ministers in July 1978 at their thirty-first ordinary session, held in Khartoum, Sudan. Consequently, the then nearly 50 OAU member delegations became part and parcel of the delegations from 138 States which, in Buenos Aires on 12 September 1978, adopted by consensus a plan of action now known as the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

What subsequently gladdened the hearts of all Africans — and, I must add, the hearts of citizens of all developing countries — was that singular display of wisdom and sensitivity on the part of this Assembly in December 1978, when it resolved to endorse the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, as it concerns the development needs of more than two thirds of United Nations membership, and urged all Governments and elements of the United Nations system to implement its recommendations.

Today, two decades later and on the threshold of a new millennium, the twentieth anniversary of the blueprint Buenos Aires Plan of Action should afford us all not just an opportunity to roll out the drums and beat our chests in celebration of the achievements we have made. Today, and equally importantly, we all should undergo a sober reflection, stocktaking and candid inward search that will show us concretely how much we ought to have achieved and the problems or further challenges we need to overcome.

Mr. Ka (Senegal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Indeed, nothing implies the importance of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action more than the words of our good friend and the highly resourceful outgoing Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mr. James Gustav Speth, when he reminded us in May this year that, for the developing countries, TCDC and South-South cooperation are no longer options, but imperatives in our age of globalization. As we celebrate, we are therefore justifiably joyful that UNDP has not abandoned the lot of the developing countries. Particularly through its Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and its prolific publicity literature, UNDP has helped in no small measure to increase awareness of the importance of TCDC and the development needs of the developing countries. As a reliable catalyst and active partner of national Governments and organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, the Special Unit has been promoting and monitoring the global application of TCDC in a variety of ways, including sponsorship of TCDC activities-based studies and assessments, enhancement of national capacities for the management of TCDC, and matching capacities with needs.

It is out of such sensitization and enhancement efforts that a number of countries have come to allocate significant resources for TCDC activities from their national budgets and/or UNDP country allocations. It is out of such efforts that research — for instance, into medicinal plants in one of the South countries — has recently yielded a welcome lead into the network research and management of the menace of the sickle-cell disease in some other developing countries, thus raising hope for a definite cure some day. We are also happy that complementarities of natural endowments among the developing countries and their varying stages of development, as highlighted in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, have deepened technical cooperation among some countries in the South, thus providing them with vast opportunities for knowledge transfer or exchange with relative ease and at less expense than if they had had to acquire similar knowledge from the developed countries.

Neither must we fail to acknowledge at this gathering the supporting and positive role being similarly played by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for the promotion of South-South trade and finance, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Non-Aligned Movement and the South Centre in support of the G-77 initiatives for cooperation.

In conclusion, let me return to a point made in our earlier outline. As we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, we will be doing our collective memory and posterity a great favour if we also spare a little time to highlight areas which our best of efforts might have neither reached nor yielded desired results from.

First, even a full-course intra-South technical cooperation programme, involving all developing countries, would still need official development assistance to succeed in achieving its goal. The continuing decline

of success in achieving the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance, which is a major external source for the financing of development, therefore needs to be reversed in order to enable TCDC to have the crucial input to infrastructural and social sector development from the developed countries.

Secondly, and made even worse by the recent adverse global financial crisis, all developing countries, especially the 40 least developed among them, most of which are in Africa, are being severely hindered in their cooperating efforts by excruciatingly heavy external debt burdens. This handicap is especially bad for the heavily indebted poor countries. One of the many measures to alleviate its negative impact lies in the conversion of debt to promote development investments, in accordance with the needs of developing countries.

Thirdly, market access to exports from developing countries is one crucial component that will enhance the capacity of each developing country to cooperate more gainfully and meaningfully. The current international trading system will assist developing countries, especially those producing commodities, more gainfully if, and only if, the system is made multilaterally equitable, secure, non-discriminatory and predictable in its rules and thereby capable of enhancing the economic capacity of the developing countries concerned.

These are the barest minimum of core needs of the developing countries. If they are properly addressed, and if there is the required increase in core resources for United Nations Development Programme funding, as we are about to enter the twenty-first year of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, a means will be generated to eradicate poverty and appropriately protect and empower the citizenry of developing countries to access the benefits of globalization in an interdependent world.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I call next on the representative of Nepal, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Shah (Nepal): I will heed the President's repeated advice and be as brief as possible.

On behalf of the member States of the Asian Group, I should like to pay our tribute to the spirit and efforts of the 138 countries which adopted the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries 20 years ago in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Today is an occasion to renew our commitment and to reaffirm the continued relevance of South-South cooperation, with the ultimate objective of building a more equitable global partnership for development and peace. It is also an occasion for all of us to review not only the achievements of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, but, more important, the lessons learned from its implementation.

In the 20 years since the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, profound and almost unrecognizable changes have taken place in international relations. Greater interdependence in the world, brought about by globalization and economic liberalization, is posing new challenges and risks, but it also provides a new impetus and a new rationale for closer cooperation among nations. We believe that further strengthening of South-South cooperation is an essential instrument for ensuring the equitable participation of developing countries in the emerging global economy.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I call on the representative of Poland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Wyzner (Poland): I am privileged to offer a few observations today on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Twenty years ago the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries marked a new perception of the environment needed for international dialogue on technical cooperation. For a long time this cooperation had been concentrated almost exclusively along traditional lines of North-South partnership, while the growing potential of the developing countries themselves had not been fully taken into consideration. The Buenos Aires Conference generated a new type of international relations, based on closer regional exchange of experiences between developing countries, with the use of a special technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) modality anchored in the operational activities of the United Nations system.

In the last two decades a number of developing countries have emerged as areas of considerable

economic development and as important sources of technological innovation. We note with satisfaction the increasing economic potential of the South, which is becoming an important player in the world economy. On the other hand, this fact reinforces both the opportunities and the further need of the developing countries to forge the links of cooperation among themselves. To this end, TCDC offers effective tools for an exchange of experiences in technical cooperation and problem-solving between developing countries in pursuit of their mutual interests with the final goal of increasing the competitiveness of their economies in the global markets. At the same time, regional cooperation serves well the purpose of winning the support of civil societies for national policies, as it is easier for them to relate to regional problems before they look beyond these to global ones.

We are pleased to note that the United Nations has played a crucial role in the process of implementing the TCDC modality in the operational activities of the system. Special credit should be given to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for incorporating these practices in programmes realized with a wide variety of partners on local levels and for establishing a Trust Fund which serves to intensify South-South cooperation.

By endorsing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action in its resolution of 1978, the General Assembly gave tangible proof of the commitment of the international community to the spirit and the ultimate objective of the Plan. On a later occasion the General Assembly endorsed new directions to strengthen TCDC's role in offering technical advice for developmental activities. At the same time, the Economic and Social Council recommended that first consideration be given to TCDC for use in development efforts in the United Nations system as well as with all other partners. As a result, intensified actions by several entities of the United Nations system, such as UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and some of the regional economic commissions were undertaken to include TCDC in the mainstream of their activities. However, a lot of work has yet to be done in this field, and it is our belief that strengthening of the TCDC has to be encouraged as an inherent part of developing effective regional cooperation.

Taking into account the views expressed in the Agenda for Development, as well as the position taken last year by the General Assembly in its resolution on economic and technical cooperation among developing countries, we believe that the United Nations system should continue its efforts to strengthen South-South cooperation, which, to quote from that resolution, "constitutes an important element of international cooperation for development and is an essential basis for national and collective self-reliance as well as a means of ensuring the effective integration and participation of developing countries in the world economy and ... is not a substitute for, but rather complementary to, North-South cooperation". (*resolution 52/205, para. 2*)

In the Group of Eastern European States we realize that there is considerable unexplored potential for forming new partnership ties among the countries of the South and the countries of our Group. There is also a need to extend these links beyond the old divisions of South and North or East and West. On this solemn occasion, we reaffirm our commitment to achieving that goal in the years to come, in accordance with the theme of our meeting today, "Towards a global partnership for South-South cooperation" in the new millennium.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of the Dominican Republic, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mrs. Aguiar (Dominican Republic) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am greatly honoured, as coordinator of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, to hail this auspicious anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, which bears the name of a progressive and forward-looking city in our hemisphere.

In 1978 the Buenos Aires Plan of Action gave impetus to new forms of South-South cooperation among developing countries. Its goals included promoting the capacity of developing countries to harness their own means to find solutions to the problems of development in keeping with their own values, aspirations and specific needs; promoting and reinforcing a collective capacity among developing countries by exchanging experiences, sharing technical resources and developing complementary capabilities; increasing the volume and enhancing the quality of international cooperation and increasing the efficiency of the resources devoted to general technical cooperation through the pooling of skills; and promoting the transfer of appropriate technology and expertise. Since those goals were set, new approaches to subregional, regional and interregional economic cooperation have emerged, compelling our countries to revitalize the channels of this cooperation.

The Plan was proposed at the historic moment of the most recent wave of decolonization, particularly in Africa but also in Asia and the Caribbean, which marked a milestone in international cooperation. Acknowledged as an effective way of promoting development among developing countries, the form, content and goals of South-South cooperation have brought about significant changes, which are now taking place, however, within a process of globalization that affects vital organs of our national economies and productive systems on the one hand, and, on the other, the traditional mechanisms of social solidarity. The Plan's merits were immediately recognized by the General Assembly, which, in resolution 33/134, endorsed the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, considering it to be "an important instrument of the international community to intensify and strengthen co-operation among developing countries". (*resolution 33/134, para. 4*)

As an essential complementary component, the General Assembly established, by resolution 38/201, the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund, designed to support technical and economic cooperation among developing countries of the Group of 77, and to finance feasibility and pre-investment studies and assist the implementation of projects for economic cooperation among developing countries.

The validity and force of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action have been confirmed by the progress made towards goals such as promoting the capacity of countries to harness their own means, the fostering of collective capacity and the exchange of experiences with a view to developing complementary capacities. However, since the laws of the market often prevail, our countries are forced to cope with this unprecedented challenge by modifying their analytical approaches and the strategies that should be implemented in the developing world.

We are now seeing the emergence of decisive factors that are transforming the usual framework, including the end of the role of the State as manager and entrepreneur; technological advances; the tightness of domestic markets; and the globalization of decisions relating to direct foreign investment. Therefore, to sustain successful South-South cooperation, our countries must make use of competitive advantages resulting from a better distribution of resources, market efficiency and economies of scale and specialization.

However, the principles of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action remain as valid as they were in 1978: solidarity, or the principle of brotherhood among nations, in which two or more join forces to achieve common goals; sovereignty, or the principle of self-determination of States and mutual cooperation within the framework of the integration of countries and regions; dignity, or the principle that reaffirms the legitimacy and equality of rights and respect for the diversity of countries without conditions or dependency among cooperating partners.

We must keep in mind, however, that the successes we have achieved thanks to the Buenos Aires Plan of Action should in no way be presented as a smokescreen to hide our priorities. We must work to pool our needs and capacities in order to achieve better solutions in key areas such as agricultural development, food production and processing technologies.

A major obstacle to this is the shortage of resources for development, which could be eliminated or alleviated by the fact that certain economies of the group of developing countries are emerging as surplus economies, meaning that they have the capacity to export capital. It would be desirable to make greater use of such a resource. In this regard, there is a need for the political will to create regional mechanisms to promote the flow of capital investment within each of the developing regions. The modalities of technical cooperation among developing countries, of reciprocity, exchange and cooperative common use and contribution, would thus reflect the previously established principles of a balanced cooperation among equals.

It would be possible to make many other proposals for analysis and discussion. And the very fact that today we are discussing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and setting innovative tasks for ourselves speaks eloquently of the achievements of the last 20 years in the area of cooperation among the peoples and countries of the South.

However, we must appeal to those countries that have been left behind by this new plan — landlocked countries, small island States, and those subject to desertification and climate change. There is a place for them as well in this bold new movement.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Andorra, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra) (*interpretation from French*): The Group of Western European and other States is pleased to be able to celebrate the twentieth

anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries. The past two decades have shown us that the growth in horizontal South-South exchanges is an essential element for development. In that way the developing countries can control exchanges in a way that is absolutely fair with partners whose technical and economic goals are similar but whose concrete experiences are complementary to theirs. In a world that is increasingly globalized, particularly at the economic level, it is therefore important that developing economies maintain steady relations with each other so that the flow of information and cooperation can bring together States that formerly did not know each other well or that encountered each other only through their common partners in the North. It is necessary for such solidarity and South-South projects to come into being so that globalization, that late twentieth century phenomenon, can be truly multidimensional.

Development is a process from which all of humankind benefits. The rich countries will, in fact, be truly rich only when the living conditions of the majority of humankind rise to the same level as those of the most fortunate among us. Furthermore, because of globalization, recent crises in emerging economies risk spreading to the industrialized States, which again demonstrates the interrelationship that exists between the rich and the poor countries. Development concerns all of us, as the Group of Western European and other States is fully aware.

The States members of the Group of Western European and other States support all forms of development efforts and take a very positive view of the proliferation of South-South cooperation that followed the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. The Bandung Framework for Asia-Africa Cooperation, the varied cooperation activities that have recently taken place between Latin America and Eastern Europe and the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States show the extent to which South-South initiatives can and must spread. However, it is important to note that technical and economic cooperation between countries is complementary to North-South relations, not a substitute for them. Effective coordination between those two types of cooperation will be increasingly required.

It is the duty of the Members of the United Nations to devise in the months to come the best formulas so that South-South and North-South cooperation can work together and have a synergistic effect. We must define a new partnership between developed countries and developing countries in which we all take upon ourselves our own responsibilities while leaving behind the errors of the past. The new model for development will certainly involve a combination of solidarity and responsibility in which North-South action will be integrated with South-South cooperation. Numerous small, but independent and successful, South-South projects can create conditions for setting up other targeted and effective development assistance projects.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Progress in communications and information technology has made globalization irreversible in all its aspects. The developing countries are discovering possibilities for cooperation and mutual enrichment, which we must encourage. In this, the Group of Western European and other States congratulates the United Nations bodies that are acting to promote such exchanges, such as the United Nations Development Programme and the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries. Here in the United Nations we are starting a new debate on development that will not leave out South-South cooperation. The Assembly can rest assured that the States members of the Group of Western European and other States will make their contribution.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of the United States of America, the host country.

Mr. Squadron (United States of America): I am delighted, on behalf of the United States, the host country, to join in this discussion of technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC). It provides us all with the opportunity to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action of 1978, which was intended to encourage self-reliance and mutual support among developing countries through the exchange of technical information. Those goals are as valid today as when the Buenos Aires Plan of Action was first adopted.

The United States supports economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC). We agree wholeheartedly with the view of the Secretary-General, who said in May last year that South-South cooperation must be more than a slogan. At the same time, we agree with the 1997 statement of the tenth session of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, which noted that South-

South cooperation should be viewed not as a substitute for, but rather as a complement to, North-South cooperation. We have incorporated the principles of TCDC into many of our bilateral development assistance programmes.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee also supports both TCDC and ECDC. The United States applauds the current role of the United Nations in encouraging TCDC, in particular the efforts of the Special Unit housed within the United Nations Development Programme. We believe that TCDC fits very well within broader efforts to promote coordination, cooperation and reform among all the nations of the world.

The United States believes that we should increase the effectiveness of existing TCDC resources. Specifically, we believe that it is critically important to continue developing programme effectiveness indicators for those programmes. Developing good feedback mechanisms that measure the effectiveness of programmes benefits not only those who fund the programmes but the beneficiaries as well. As beneficiary countries contribute to and receive reports on which programmes work best, they will be in a better position to disseminate best-practice information to other potential beneficiaries. That is the essence of TCDC: developing countries helping each other.

Good feedback reporting on programme benefits by beneficiary countries will benefit everybody in another way: programme analysis enhances the credibility of those programmes and makes it easier to justify funding decisions. Insightful analysis advances the goal of transparency, which benefits both those who provide funds and the beneficiaries.

In conclusion, the United States is extremely pleased to host this discussion. We thank representatives for their attendance and participation. We look forward to a fruitful exchange of views with the other nations of the world on this subject.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Indonesia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would like to congratulate the President and the General Assembly on having organized this important commemorative meeting. We are very grateful to all the Members that last year supported the initiative of the Group of 77 and China that led to the adoption of the resolution by the General Assembly to convene this commemorative meeting.

Since its inception, the Group of 77 has always attached fundamental importance to promoting economic and technical cooperation among developing countries. Such cooperation is necessary to reduce the vulnerability of the developing countries to external factors and to maximize complementarities for accelerating the development of their economies. The historic Buenos Aires Plan of Action, adopted 20 years ago, in September 1978, and subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly, was an expression of the aspirations of developing countries and a reflection of their desire to promote economic cooperation among themselves as a complement to North-South cooperation and as an integral part of the collective action of the Group aimed at the promotion of international cooperation for development. It marked the beginning of a new phase of such cooperation, providing a blueprint with a well-defined mechanism for implementation and follow-up. The major thrust of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action remains of vital importance, and it is even more relevant today as a result of globalization and liberalization. The Group of 77 and China renews its commitment to intensify cooperation among developing countries for the attainment of collective self-reliance, as is evidenced in the recently adopted Declaration of the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Declaration of Foreign Ministers of the Group of 77 adopted last month.

In recent years, the forces of globalization and liberalization have brought dramatic changes on the global economic scene. For developing countries, various constraints beyond their control prevent them from fully participating in this process. The majority of developing countries and, in particular, the least developed and the landlocked countries, with their meagre resources and unfavourable external supportive environment, are faced with the seemingly insurmountable challenge of global competition, which has tended to marginalize them. In this context, if South-South cooperation were more vigorously pursued, the developing countries would have greater leverage on their external environment and on the North-South cooperation dialogue. At the same time, it would contribute to solving many problems of development in the developing countries and thus enable them to face the challenge of integrating with the global economy more successfully on equitable and symmetric terms.

The developing countries have always been conscious of their own responsibility for promoting their economic development and implementing economic and technical cooperation among themselves. The potential of economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC) and technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) for trade and development is particularly great at this juncture in view of the increased liberalization and openness of developing countries and the substantial efforts to reform their trade policies. In this context, it is imperative that the Global System of Trade Preferences among developing countries (GSTP), whose origin is in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, be further strengthened. There is a need to consider giving new impetus to GSTP negotiations by adjusting past GSTP concessions to the currently applied tariff and import measures resulting from national tariff and trade reforms, as well as from the Uruguay Round agreements. It is also important to strengthen regional and interregional trade by enlarging participation, expanding product coverage and deepening mutual concessions. The potential effectiveness of the GSTP has been substantially increased with the re-evaluation of the tariff instruments in developing countries' regimes following large-scale liberalization of non-tariff measures by many developing countries.

For instance, the GSTP Agreement provides that the special needs of the least developed countries, including landlocked countries should clearly be recognized, and that concrete preferential measures in favour of these countries should be agreed upon. The least developed countries and many landlocked countries will not be required to make concessions on a reciprocal basis. These measures in the GSTP Agreement are aimed at boosting the exports of the least developed countries, thereby enhancing their living standards.

The Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund and the trust fund for South-South Cooperation, established with a view to supporting activities on economic and technical cooperation among developing countries, were of critical importance to the Group of 77 and China in order to achieve national collective self-reliance. It is essential today to increase the resources of both Funds in order to support South-South cooperation. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to all countries, particularly to donor countries, to contribute generously to both Funds with a view to enabling the Group of 77 and China to continue supporting South-South cooperative projects.

The United Nations system is uniquely placed to assist developing countries in making the transition to a new economic era. The ability of its institutions to objectively analyse economic trends and to indicate policy options that give primacy to developmental considerations is the backbone of economic cooperation among developing countries. The Group of 77 and China draws heavily on the support provided to it by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations system as a whole for the implementation of objectives set out in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for TCDC. In this context, and with a view to marking both this anniversary and the ongoing efforts of the United Nations system in supporting South-South cooperation, I would like to propose that the General Assembly should declare a United Nations day on South-South cooperation. We also recognize the work undertaken by many institutions of the South aimed at providing a valuable contribution to increasing the awareness of the international community, particularly in terms of the need for international cooperation requirements in support of ECDC and TCDC. In this regard, the ongoing activities of the Non-Aligned Movement's centre for South-South technical cooperation in Jakarta deserve our support.

Due to the present world economic situation, the question of intensifying South-South cooperation needs to be accorded top priority by the United Nations system and the international community. The Group of 77 and China thoroughly deliberated this question at the recently held ministerial meeting in New York. The core of the discussions was on the indispensability of collective self-reliance not only as a vital instrument for accelerating development and eradicating poverty, but also as crucial for engaging the North in meaningful dialogue with the South.

The main focus for intensifying South-South cooperation centres on the Caracas Programme of Action and the Buenos Aires Plan of Action on TCDC. While the implementation of these two programmes has yielded some results, much more needs to be done. In this regard, the question of harmonizing both programmes was squarely faced at the recently held South-South Conference in San José. The Conference rightly recommended to the Group of 77 and China to consolidate and coordinate its activities on various issues and in various forums, in order to harmonize South-South initiatives.

With increasing obstacles to our economic development, with the North-South dialogue yet to get under way, and with emerging complementarities among developing countries, it is even more urgent today than it was 20 years ago when the Buenos Aires Plan of Action was adopted to broaden the scope of our own technical and economic cooperation.

While it is true that we must provide greater momentum to ECDC and TCDC activities, we should guard against undertaking projects without fully assessing their potential. Indeed, this can greatly harm the very cause that we seek to promote. We must at all times remember that ECDC and TCDC projects must provide mutual benefits to developing countries and should be economically viable. In this context, I am pleased to announce that the office of the Chairman of the Group of 77 will set up shortly a research programme on South-South cooperation in close collaboration with the Group of 77 chapters and with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and other relevant United Nations institutions, with a view to promoting research studies in the field of South-South cooperation.

As the Group of 77 and China have pointed out on many occasions, the Caracas Programme of Action and the Buenos Aires Plan of Action are unusual in concept. They provide a plan of action with clearly laid down mechanisms for support, follow-up and review with diverse components woven together into a precise timetable for implementation. They should have provided ECDC and TCDC with the dynamism that was earlier lacking. The experience of the past two decades has raised several questions, relating in particular to such matters as the financing of South-South cooperation. Today there is a need to find appropriate organizational modalities effectively to tap resources from various international organizations and financial institutions that could be directed towards supporting South-South cooperation activities and programmes and to outline a common strategy to foster international support for the regional and subregional economic groupings of developing countries and encourage mutual links and cooperation among them. In this context, let me take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to countries that continue to support South-South cooperation, particularly the Government of Japan, which is generously supporting the forthcoming conference on subregional and regional economic integration, to be held from 1 to 4 December 1998 in Bali.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, our strong support for the activities being undertaken by the UNDP and its Special Unit for TCDC with a view to supporting South-South cooperation. In their final declaration, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 who met last month in New York expressed their appreciation for the support provided by the UNDP and its Special Unit for TCDC in support of South-South cooperation, and encouraged the UNDP to continue to expand this cooperation with the Group of 77 for the benefit of all developing countries.

Finally, let me state that the United Nations system should articulate a global strategy that could enable all economic groupings of the South to respond adequately to the challenges of globalization and liberalization. This is an issue which should be discussed in depth by the high-level conference on subregional and regional economic integration to be held from 1 to 4 December 1998 in Bali, Indonesia.

I am confident that the forthcoming Bali conference and the South Summit will set the stage for developing countries to project their collective vision of international cooperation for development and of the strengthening of South-South cooperation for the next millennium.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I call next on the Permanent Representative of Austria, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union at this commemorative meeting of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

Today the General Assembly celebrates the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. We want to make use of this opportunity to reflect on the lessons and accomplishments in promoting technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) over the last two decades, and to recognize the changing environment for global partnerships in the era of globalization.

Twenty years ago, the General Assembly endorsed the Buenos Aires Plan of Action as an important instrument of the international community to intensify and strengthen cooperation among developing countries, and it requested Governments, international organizations and the United Nations development system to promote and implement the objectives of the Plan.

South-South cooperation, through TCDC and economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC) is a principal strategy in support of national and international development efforts. It is an indispensable mechanism to ensure participation in the global economy. Technical cooperation characterized by North-South relations remains an important factor in promoting sustainable human development. Since the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, profound changes have taken place in international relations. The deepening of interdependence among nations, a phenomenon we call globalization, provides new impetus, new opportunities and a new rationale for closer cooperation, as well as new challenges for States. We welcome the initiatives at regional and subregional levels to strengthen cooperation and integration among local economies.

We realize that we live in a rapidly changing world, and we have gathered here today to look to the future. The theme of our commemoration is "Towards a global partnership for South-South cooperation in the new millennium", and at the panel meeting this afternoon we should explore the role and relevance of technical and economic cooperation among developing countries in an increasingly interdependent world.

The European Union attaches great importance to technical cooperation among developing countries. The Union reaffirms its commitment to supporting South-South cooperation and technical and economic cooperation among developing countries. In promoting TCDC, developing countries harness and utilize the capacities that exist in their own countries. TCDC is a useful tool for and among developing countries, but donor countries must play an active and supportive role, fostering an increased use of the TCDC modality in development cooperation. The United Nations system has a key responsibility as promoter and catalyst for South-South cooperation. In this context, the European Union would like to reiterate that TCDC should not be treated as a special programme, but should be integrated in the overall work of the operational activities of the United Nations system.

The potential development impact of TCDC on developing countries is increasingly recognized, and the European Union notes with satisfaction the expansion of the use of TCDC over the years. In this context, the European Union would like to mention as an example the Partners in Population and Development initiative supported by the United Nations Population Fund. The enhanced decentralization within the United Nations development system will further TCDC as a tool for development programming and as a logical option for development cooperation.

In this regard, the European Union commends the work of the TCDC Special Unit within the United Nations Development Programme and the ongoing support of the United Nations Development Programme for the TCDC modality, which is being given first consideration in programming as a corporate policy by the UNDP Administrator. This support is to be followed up by other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system.

The European Union believes that the revised guidelines for the review of policies and procedures concerning TCDC have accentuated the continued validity and relevance of TCDC as an instrument for assisting developing countries to participate effectively in the emerging global environment. With these tools in place, we hope South-South cooperation can prosper in the next millennium.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa, who will speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Mr. Jele (South Africa): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement at this meeting commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

Coming so soon after our summit in Durban, this meeting could not be more timely. The issues and concerns of developing countries at the Buenos Aires meeting continue to challenge our commitment to South-South cooperation. For this reason, South-South cooperation continues to be one of the sound bases on which the developing countries can extricate themselves through their own efforts from the mire of underdevelopment.

The theme for this commemorative meeting is fitting and captures the interdependence of our global efforts for

the full realization of our objective. Like the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, the advances made so far in South-South cooperation help facilitate the construction of a bridge across our experiences and efforts. It unites and consolidates national, regional, subregional and interregional efforts through various bodies and delivery systems. Through technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) developing countries will be able to respond effectively and positively to the challenges of globalization and liberalization, thus moving away from the risk of marginalization. These efforts are indispensable for ensuring an equitable mode of participation for developing countries in the global economy.

Such efforts would also be underpinned by North-South cooperation and be directed at strengthening and accelerating technology transfers, skills, knowledge and information dissemination in the framework of South-South cooperation. To this end, we recall General Assembly resolution 3251 (XXIX) of 4 December 1974, which mandated the establishment of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries to promote TCDC on a system-wide basis. Indeed, that decision could not have been more timely and visionary, given the significant distance we have travelled to fully realize the aim, among others, of making TCDC a key component of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) poverty eradication strategy.

In underscoring the need for South-South cooperation, we note with appreciation the marking of this commemoration at various levels — the high-level plenary session, the substantive panel discussion and the exhibit on South-South cooperation. It is through similar efforts that awareness-building and the need for the mobilization of efforts to attain South-South cooperation may become a reality.

We commend the Special Unit for continuing to formulate its distinct programme to strengthen the capacity of developing countries and to mutually reinforce cooperation in key areas for development. Resource provision for capacity-building is crucial and needs to be provided on a continuous, secure and incremental basis. To this end, we continue to make a case for an increase in the core resources of UNDP in order to consolidate the progress made thus far, as well as to cover the needs of other developing countries.

We call on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing countries and UNDP, as well as other organizations, to jointly formulate concrete recommendations on the follow-up and implementation of the San José Declaration and Plan of Action, as adopted by the South-South Conference on Finance, Trade and Investment. We believe that this would have added value for all our efforts to enhance the resurgence of interest in South-South cooperation to support the efforts of developing countries to participate equitably in the global economy.

It is our belief that, taken as a whole, such efforts would go a long way towards intensifying current processes to strengthen various interregional dialogues, cooperation and the exchange of experiences among various regional economic groupings for South-South cooperation. We hope that the report of the Secretary-General (TCDC/10/2) on the review of the progress made in implementing the Buenos Aires Plan of Action; the decisions of the High-level Committee; the recommendations of the South Commission; and its analytical summary of information received from Governments, other organizations in the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations on the policies and activities undertaken to promote TCDC will, despite other constraints, prove that TCDC continues to be a widely used mechanism between countries, underpinning many other local arrangements. This also goes with the necessary awareness to adopt more effective methods of delivery and policies.

The importance of these initiatives lies in the observation that most developing countries now allocate significant resources from their national budgets for TCDC ventures to complement an array of other efforts which are also mirrored through regional institutions and other actors, such as the South Centre and UNDP through regional bureaus and country offices.

We hope that the Special Unit, by supporting national and regional development initiatives, can continue to be a catalyst and an active partner in promoting and monitoring the global trends in TCDC and its application. The same applies to other United Nations agencies which have continued in similar fashion in areas of their own competence.

We also note with satisfaction progress made in the implementation of the new-directions strategy for technical cooperation among developing countries.

Finally, we underscore the need for developing countries and the United Nations system to increase support for TCDC and to strengthen the commitment to promote it as a useful tool for development. The Special

Unit also needs to keep its separate identity within UNDP in order to continue being effective in its work, while at the same time being complemented by other developmental agencies and actors.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Konishi (Japan): The concept of South-South cooperation emerged in the 1970s as a means of strengthening the solidarity of the South in its struggle against the North and to promote among the developing countries a collective self-reliance that would enable them to participate in the international economic system.

When the cold war came to an end, this concept of South-South cooperation changed. Today, South-South cooperation has been widely accepted as an effective modality of development cooperation in the spirit of "sharing the experiences". Moreover, a new modality of triangular cooperation involving the new dimension of cooperation between the North and the South has emerged.

Japan has actively supported South-South cooperation because it provides useful assistance tailored to the specific needs and conditions of individual developing countries and because it contributes to broadening the spectrum of actors involved in development cooperation. Japan hosted the Tokyo International Conference on African Development in 1993 and the Asia-Africa Forums of 1994 and 1997. It also convened the Conference on Promoting South-South Cooperation in May this year. It has implemented various triangular cooperation projects, cooperated in institution-building of the organizations responsible for South-South cooperation in developing countries, and provided financial assistance for such cooperation through the Japan-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Resources Development Fund: $2 million in 1996 and 1997, and $4 million in 1998.

Japan commits itself to continuing to play this role in the future. The second Tokyo International Conference on African Development, which will be convened from 19 to 21 October 1998 with the participation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the heads of State of a number of African countries, will emphasize the importance of South-South cooperation, and in particular Asia-Africa cooperation, including private sector development.

In further broadening the scope of South-South cooperation on the basis of the concept of "sharing the experiences", ownership by developing countries is of great importance. It is critical that developing countries themselves fully accept that South-South cooperation is an effective modality of development cooperation that goes beyond enhancing their solidarity. While South-South cooperation is not a substitute for but a complement to North-South cooperation, it embodies various comparative advantages to North-South cooperation, such as the exchange of technologies and know-how more appropriate to the actual conditions in developing countries.

In order to further strengthen South-South cooperation, developing countries should make the most of such comparative advantages, understanding that both South-South cooperation and North-South cooperation are key elements in the realization of their national development programmes. And it is essential to develop and strengthen the human resources who will be responsible for the implementation of South-South cooperation.

Developed countries, in their turn, should support the efforts of developing countries through triangular cooperation involving the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, they should convey to the developing countries the know-how and expertise they have derived from their own experience in development cooperation.

Finally, to promote South-South cooperation, it is necessary to create an environment that permits easy access to information on successful examples of such efforts. It would be of great value to all if a system could be established to collect those successful examples from different countries and organizations and to make them available to developing countries.

In conclusion, South-South cooperation has enormous potential as an effective modality of development cooperation in the twenty-first century. It is up to developing countries to take the initiative for South-South cooperation, and developed countries should continue to actively support such cooperation.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The commemorative meeting to mark the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries is now concluded.

The meeting rose at noon.

United Nations A/53/PV.32

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

32nd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 7 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

Report of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives (A/53/45)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/211)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/53/210)

Draft decision (A/53/45, para. 87)

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam): First of all, let me congratulate Mr. Opertti for being chosen to preside over this important plenary session of the General Assembly. I should also like to associate myself with the statement made yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen in March 1995 marked the renewed commitment of the international community to treating social development as the highest priority in the agenda of nations and of the world.

We are pleased to note that, during the three years that have passed since the Summit, this commitment has been translated into an enhanced endeavour to promote social development, in particular in the three areas of focus of the Summit: poverty eradication, productive employment and social integration. In this regard, my delegation would like to commend the Secretary-General for his report, contained in document A/53/211. The report has provided us with updated information on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development by principal intergovernmental bodies, such as the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, and by the United Nations specialized agencies and the community of nations as a whole. A timetable has been devised for the intergovernmental process towards the year 2000, when the special session will take place to review and assess the implementation of the outcome of the Summit.

The report acknowledges that many Governments continue to make efforts to uphold the commitments made at Copenhagen in 1995. We also share the view that the political momentum provided by the Summit needs to be further maintained and strengthened.

98-86018 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

However, we share the concern, as manifested in the Secretary-General's remarks, that

> "poverty, unemployment and social integration continue to be desperately serious problems which tear at the social fabric of many countries and are often the source of persistent subregional and regional tensions". (*A/53/211, para. 22*)

We believe that greater efforts should be further pursued to implement the goals agreed at the Summit.

With regard to the activities of the United Nations specialized agencies, my delegation commends the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for its research activities on linkages between poverty reduction and gender equality and between poverty reduction and inequality, as well as in assessing the impacts of globalization on poverty and resource distribution. We would also like to commend the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on its contributions and achievements.

Along this line, an important international meeting on the 20/20 Initiative will be held from 27 to 29 October 1998 in Hanoi, the capital city of our country, to assess the progress made since the 1996 Oslo Conference. The Hanoi conference will focus on the significance of investing in basic social services and on how to increase the efficiency and effectiveness in resource spending on basic social services and to optimize the quality and accessibility of services. It is an honour for Viet Nam to host this conference in Hanoi and we are convinced that it will be a success. The process known as the 20/20 Initiative represents a real endeavour of the countries concerned about the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development. We take this opportunity to extend our special appreciation to the Netherlands, Norway and UNICEF for the pursuit of this initiative.

At its resumed organizational session in May, as well as its substantive session in July this year, the Economic and Social Council focused its discussions on, among other things, many social issues, such as women, children, refugees, drug and crime control. The Council adopted a number of resolutions for coordination in activities by functional commissions and specialized agencies to conduct studies on social issues, work out programmes and assist countries in dealing with them effectively. Being a new member of the Economic and Social Council, Viet Nam has actively participated in the Council's deliberations.

The Commission for Social Development met in New York from 10 to 20 February to consider the priority theme under its restructured agenda and multi-year programme of work, entitled "Promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons". It adopted recommendations for action at all levels and in the areas of promoting social integration through responsive government, full participation in society, non-discrimination, tolerance, equality and social justice. These recommendations also call for enhancing social protection, reducing vulnerability and enhancing employment opportunities for groups with specific needs; and doing away with violence, crime and the problem of illicit drugs and substance abuse. It also decided on the priority themes for the next session, to be held in February 1999, as "Social services for all" and "Initiation of the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit".

The Preparatory Committee's organizational session, held in New York from 19 to 22 May 1998, held a general debate on the preparations for the special session and two panel discussions on the appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit. My delegation takes note of the excellent work done by those bodies.

Fully aware of the urgent need for the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, Vietnam has continued its policy of renovation — *Doi moi* — and achieved considerable success in the socio-economic fields during the last few years. Social development constitutes a major component of our country's comprehensive long-term development strategy and plans. I would like to focus on the most outstanding areas that have attracted much attention and investment by the Government, namely, employment, gender equality and poverty eradication.

Employment has increasingly been a major issue. It is estimated that in a population of 78 million, the workforce will be over 40 million by the year 2000. The Government has made every effort to produce more job opportunities, especially for the young segment of the workforce, and to reduce the level of unemployment through an integrated policy of socio-economic development. In the context of the Asian financial crisis, the task of looking for jobs is made even more difficult due to the lack of adequate working efficiency and proper training of the general workforce. Only 12.2 per cent of workers have the technical training needed in the modern

work place. At present, almost 70 per cent of the labour force are involved in agriculture, while only 10.5 per cent work in industry and construction and 19.7 per cent work in services. Along with economic development, the country is trying to increase the number of skilled workers from 22 per cent to 25 per cent of the labour force, which will require fundamental changes in the methodology and organization of vocational training. The workforce will also have to be distributed appropriately in the economic sectors and geographic regions.

In an effort to deal with this situation and to mitigate the cutbacks at State-owned enterprises, in July 1997 the Government of Viet Nam approved a national job creation programme which will last for four years, from 1997 to the year 2000. Its basic goal is twofold: to create new jobs, and to protect those who are unemployed, which also means to ensure employment for those who are capable of working and to implement measures to support jobless people. In order to achieve these goals, economic development must generate 5 million new jobs. Furthermore, the programme must train 4.5 million people and increase the skilled workforce to 25 per cent by the year 2000.

The programme also consists of three main measures for effective implementation. First, government laws and policies must strengthen national economic growth, the cornerstone of higher employment rates. For instance, industrial and economic zones should focus on small enterprise development and appropriate technology to attract the largest number of workers. Rural development should also proceed with the goal of providing an adequate number of jobs. Secondly, workers should be provided with stable jobs, not mass dismissals, and unemployment insurance should gradually be applied across the economy. Thirdly, direct assistance and job promotion for vulnerable people should be strengthened. The programme will be supported by the National Fund for Job Creation, estimated at 4.8 trillion Vietnamese dong yearly, and other investment sources which include the State budget and government sponsorship.

Advancement of women continues to be a major commitment of the Government of Viet Nam. Following the Beijing Conference, the Government has formulated a national plan of action which incorporates the objectives of the national strategies and the programmes of action from various sectors, provinces and cities. This plan of action consists of 11 concrete objectives and guidelines, some of which are to create jobs and equal opportunities for women in education and training so as to improve their educational level in various areas, to improve health care for and protection of women and children, to enhance the role and position of women in leadership and decision-making, to enhance the role of the family and to protect female children and facilitate their development in all fields. The National Committee for the Advancement of Women (CFAW) has been designated to coordinate these activities.

Recently, a survey was completed on mechanisms for the advancement of women at all levels. It has been recommended, among other things, that gender awareness and policies be disseminated to all CFAW members at all levels, that statistical indicators on gender be collected regularly, that a gender analysis framework be integrated in every organization's working plan and that the human resources and facilities of CFAW be strengthened.

The most important area of all is poverty eradication. In order to realize the national motto "Wealthy people, strong country, just and civilized society", the Government of Viet Nam, with the assistance of the World Bank, has been carrying out a national programme for development and poverty alleviation. During the last few years, priority has been given to poverty reduction and the elimination of hunger in mountainous and remote rural areas. The Government set up various funds for infrastructure construction, providing roads, communication networks, electricity and clean water systems for the most disadvantaged groups of people in those areas. Thanks to these efforts, in 1997 alone there was a 1.53 per cent decrease in the number of poor households in the country. However, with the negative impact of globalization, coupled with the Asian financial crisis, there remain many difficulties for the Government in dealing with the cause of poverty eradication. In this regard, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to express our high appreciation and gratitude to donor countries and the United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund for their effective cooperation and valuable assistance to Viet Nam.

Finally, as we have entered the process of preparation for the International Year of Older Persons, to be observed in 1999, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its high appreciation for the initiative taken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Thursday, 1 October, in launching the Year. This activity fully corresponds with our national tradition of the younger generation and society always respecting

the wisdom of and caring for older persons. In this regard, the Government of Viet Nam is fully committed to the ultimate goal of the International Year of Older Persons, namely to build a true "Society for all ages".

In concluding, I would like to reiterate that the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam is fully committed to the objectives and principles contained in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action adopted in 1995. We will continue our cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies in our common cause for social development.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made yesterday by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and to thank the Secretariat for providing us with the documents before this Assembly. The report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/53/211, in particular, contains useful information on follow-up activities being undertaken by Governments and by the United Nations system since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 52/25 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

My delegation fully endorses the call made by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) for organizations of the United Nations system to "utilize fully existing national-level mechanisms and frameworks" *(A/53/211, para. 34)*, while ensuring that support for the translation of conference outcomes into concrete national policies continues to remain a priority of the United Nations system.

In keeping with the importance my delegation attaches to field coordination, we also welcome the workshop jointly sponsored by the ACC and the United Nations Development Group, in Turin, Italy, in December 1997. This workshop developed integrated guidance for the resident coordinator system for country-level follow-up to global conferences. We ask that this kind of activity be continued and, if possible, that it become an integral part of the training for resident coordinators.

The adoption in June 1998 of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work by the International Labour Conference represents a further step in preserving the dignity of the worker as a human being. This is particularly important, as the human person is often ignored in favour of the powerful gods of the market, which serves only to augment social exclusion and makes the task of promoting social integration a Sisyphean one.

My delegation wishes to give special recognition to the role of the Commission for Social Development, which has primary responsibility for follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit. We fully endorsed the agreed conclusions on the priority theme for 1998 — "Promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons" — which was adopted by the Commission at its thirty-sixth session.

The agreed conclusions included recommendations for action in promoting social integration at all levels, through, *inter alia*, responsive government, enhancing social protection, creating employment opportunities for groups with specific needs and addressing violence, crime and the problem of illicit drugs and substance abuse as factors of social disintegration.

Jamaica's experience with the process of social integration is similar to that of other countries of the English-speaking Caribbean. In our societies, pluralist tendencies are quite evident, based upon the historical experience of colonialism and the plantation economy, which brought together persons of diverse social, cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Jamaica has achieved a remarkable degree of social integration over the years, due largely to the breakdown of the traditional power relations which were based on a hierarchy of race and colour. The existence of a democratic political system has been a major contributor to this reduction in social divisions.

Nevertheless, we are still faced with the challenge posed by the unequal distribution of wealth, power and prestige among the various social groups.

In order to overcome this challenge, Jamaica has adopted several strategies to promote greater participation of all groups in society in the economic, social and cultural development of the nation, from the community to the national level.

Recognizing that these strategies require serious investment in social institutions, social capital and human resource capacity-building, within the framework of poverty eradication, the Government has already incorporated elements such as the following into its national programme: human resource development, emphasizing the expansion of opportunities for education and skills training, including reform of the educational system at primary and secondary levels; a community-based approach to development; the development of

social skills, focusing primarily on the infusion of family life education and related subjects in school curricula in order to strengthen the family as a basic social institution; an employee share ownership programme; and the strengthening of the justice system.

In all of these and other policy initiatives, the Jamaican Government recognizes the special needs of vulnerable groups of society, as well as the special conditions of deprived urban communities and underdeveloped rural areas.

My delegation participated actively in the organizational session of the Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Social Summit in May this year, and we fully support the decisions made at that session. We note in particular decision III of the session, which recommends that the Commission for Social Development be entrusted with the responsibility of acting as a forum for national reporting in the lead-up to the special session. We await with interest the general guidelines, structure and common framework for national reporting to be formulated by the Secretary-General, as requested by the Preparatory Committee.

The Jamaican Government recognizes the importance of non-governmental organizations and the involvement of civil society in the implementation and follow-up to the Summit's Declaration and Programme of Action. In this regard, we wish to make special mention of the work of the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), which has been organizing regional and subregional non-governmental organization forums and other meetings on social implementation.

With respect to the special session itself, Jamaica anticipates a full and intensive agenda, as we will be involved in the challenging task of assessing achievement of the goals set at Copenhagen. The Jamaican Government agrees that that session must not renegotiate the commitments agreed at Copenhagen. We are fully conscious that the true measure of our commitment to the principles embodied in the Declaration must be demonstrated in concrete actions.

I therefore wish to reiterate my Government's appreciation to the relevant agencies of the United Nations system for their responsiveness to our various initiatives.

We look forward to expanding these and other partnerships as we seek effective global solutions to the serious problems of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration.

Ms. Banerjee (India): It is my privilege to address the Assembly on the agenda item on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

Allow me, on behalf of the Indian delegation, to join all those who have spoken before me in congratulating Mr. Opertti on his well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. Let me also express our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for the highly informative reports that have been prepared and issued on this item and for the efforts and initiatives of the Secretariat to advance the goals set by the World Summit at Copenhagen.

We would also like to associate ourselves fully with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The World Summit for Social Development marked a watershed in the recognition by the international community that development could not be limited simply to economic development or economic growth, but rather that it would have to be seen in terms of the extent to which it benefited the human person in community with others and contributed to wider social progress in larger freedom. Specifically, it succeeded in arriving at a shared global commitment at the highest level to eradicating poverty, achieving full employment and strengthening social solidarity, and it increased the attention given to social issues by many countries and most international organizations. Together with the other United Nations global conferences of the 1990s, it has led to a substantially revised and more holistic agenda of development that, at least theoretically, places participatory government, sustainable development, human rights and equity at the centre of development.

The period of three years into the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit is perhaps too short to have yielded palpable or measurable progress at the field level in the lives of people all over the world. The yardstick of success must necessarily be the extent to which social goals highlighted by the Summit have been, or are being, mainstreamed or prioritized in both national development and international relations, in particular international economic relations. It can be gauged from the extent to which institutions safeguarding social development, particularly in times of crisis, have

evolved. It can also be judged by the extent to which commitments made at the Summit have been, or are being, honoured. Another index could be the extent to which social considerations have become significant policy inputs in the sphere of inter-State economic relations, bilateral or multilateral.

The years of the mid-1990s, before and after the Social Summit, witnessed a period of growth and improvement in living standards many parts of the world, including a number of developing countries. It would be tempting to say that this period of growth and prosperity also led to a reinforcement of the goals of social development and their centrality in economic transactions. But the contrary is true: the suddenness and intensity of periodic crises, of which the Asian crisis is only the latest example, their ripple effects in other parts of the world and the inability of the international system to anticipate or contain them, have revealed the fragility of such progress and our incomprehension and helplessness before them.

The economic crisis has aggravated global inequalities and the marginalization of countries in relation to market-driven prosperity at the international level, as well as disparities at the national level. It has exposed a basic disjunction between social goals and unfettered markets, particularly short-term capital markets. It has underscored the obvious fact that the long-term development of a large part of the developing world has not been adequately supported by the international system. And it has demonstrated our basic unpreparedness to deal with the social consequences of economic turbulence that is not always, or entirely, of our own making. The three key objectives of the Social Summit — the eradication of poverty, the goal of full employment and enhanced social integration — have received serious setbacks in some parts of the world with the serious possibility of similar repercussions elsewhere.

Under the multi-year programme of work to assess progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Summit, priority this year has been given to the question of social integration. Our delegation had an opportunity to present its views on some of the predicaments involved in this and related themes facing developing countries at the thirty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development. These were the primacy of the challenge of poverty to social integration, given its magnitude, scale and global nature; the particular strains on the social fabric posed by the difficulties of addressing old and new problems of social development in the context of catching up with economic, social and living standards achieved by the advanced industrial countries in a much shorter time-frame, bearing in mind historical disadvantages; the vulnerability not just of communities, but of entire countries, to marginalization on account of such historical disadvantages compounded by market forces; the imperative of economic growth for distributive justice, even as the goals of social development — eradication of poverty, productive employment, sustainable livelihood and social integration — have to be provided for in the process of growth; and the issue of steady and enhanced external financial resources in the form of official development assistance, long-term non-concessional funding from multilateral institutions and private capital flows.

In the meantime, the Asian crisis has drawn attention to the devastating social implications of market behaviour accompanying globalization to date. Social development can be seen on two axes: one straddling basic human rights values and fundamental freedoms which need to be pursued independent of the economy, and the other straddling poverty eradication, employment and social integration, which are heavily dependent on the state of the economy. The onslaught of the Asian crisis, and the manner in which an essentially financial crisis has snowballed into a major economic and social crisis in some parts of the world, points out the inextricable interrelationship between social and economic development. It is also a crucial input into the initiatives that may be required for the follow-up to the social agenda beyond the special session in the year 2000.

What is clear is that for the goals of the Social Summit to be fully realized for the developing countries, three sets of initiatives are indispensable: a set of economic policies and mechanisms that can provide short-term stability and long-term growth and development; a corresponding set of social policies and institutions built, as far as possible, into such policies; and the required degree of international cooperation for development broadly defined by the recent United Nations conferences. Underpinning all three is the need for suitable institutional support.

The preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives is therefore taking place at a most opportune time. A number of new ideas were brought up at the first organizational session by members, by the Secretariat and by a number of non-governmental organizations, which we see as crucial partners in this

endeavour. It would perhaps be best to reserve these items for more substantive debate at the organizational session next year.

I would like next to turn to the relationship between the United Nations and the international financial centres and institutions. Increased interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the international financial institutions at the intergovernmental level and the strengthening of the policy formulation capacity of the United Nations through the integration of the analytical, normative and operational capacities of the United Nations in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, have begun to address the distance between the normative role of the United Nations, particularly in the social sphere, and the international economic institutions that have a symbiotic relationship with the market. But the distance is still too great. Discussions and decision-making within influential economic and financial institutions and groupings, including the Group of Seven industrialized countries, could also be informed further by the goals of the Social Summit to which we are all committed.

The project of social development occupies that critical area between development, broadly defined, and human rights. The three core issues of social development, as identified by the Social Summit can, and need to be, approached from both the development and human rights perspectives, and indeed may well provide the crucial link between the two. We see a two-way relationship between human rights and development, with participatory democracy as the crucial link. The task of social development, particularly because it involves people as active agents of their destiny, therefore lies at the confluence of democracy, development and human rights, and indeed, at the confluence of the State, the market and civil society. But the most crucial variable undoubtedly remains the role of a cooperative international environment where the interests of developed and developing countries are seen as shared and complementary. A rights-based approach to development ultimately depends greatly on a social and international order in which all these rights and potentialities can be realized.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Hariri (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Three years have elapsed since the Copenhagen Summit and yet the international community has still much to do in the area of social development in all its aspects, particularly as regards its cornerstone, namely the human being, especially in view of the present economic changes, whose effects will be felt in all societies.

Here I wish to emphasize that my delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Indonesia speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Copenhagen Summit was a turning point. It was there that the international community expressed its aspiration to have a better tomorrow for humanity, a future of prosperity, of freedom, free from poverty, illness, destitution, ignorance and other scourges that have beset all nations and societies.

As has clearly been shown in the last three years, social development could not merely be a set of measures. It is also the very pillar of prosperity for society. However the social objectives vary from one country to another, all cultures share in the interest in prosperity for the individual and the smooth functioning of society.

It is on the basis of this awareness that Syria started its overall development process. The aim was to develop the free person, to foster his feeling of his human identity, to enhance his enjoyment of freedom and to develop his personality, which interacts with his objectives and goals. Our policy aimed also at developing the entire potential and resources of our nation so as to increase national income and to raise the living standards of our citizens.

Thus, development plans in my country have led to an increase in the achievements and rates of social development as well as to an increase in services for health, education and social services in the towns and in the countryside. We have also augmented the levels of education, food and health, while decreasing appreciably maternal and infant mortality.

This is all part of our State policy to create an environment that is conducive to creating conditions of social development, including poverty eradication, the total participation of women in development, social integration, the provision of productive employment for people, and the elimination of unemployment. In this respect, Syria has ratified 46 labour conventions, including the convention that has a special provision on women's employment. Likewise, various sectors are being given increased and comprehensive attention. Free education is provided at all levels. It is mandatory at the primary education level and to all citizens without

discrimination. The same applies to health services that are provided by the State free of charge to everyone.

The development plan adopted by my country covers all sectors and we attach the same importance to all areas covered. No segment of the population is excluded from this process.

The Copenhagen Summit adopted a number of commitments, some to be implemented by national Governments and others by the international community. However, we find that three years after that Summit, international cooperation has declined to its lowest mark.

The developed States have not met the obligations that they undertook at the Summit. Thus the developing countries have shouldered their responsibilities despite their limited resources; this did not stop the deterioration of economic and social conditions, and the present state of imbalance has persisted. Therefore, as we look forward to the year 2000, we have to reaffirm the need to follow up on the implementation of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit and the Programme of Action. We have also to stress the importance of international cooperation aiming at national and international social development cooperation based on mutual respect and community of interest. In the context of that cooperation, the developed countries would commit themselves to meeting their obligations adopted in Copenhagen in order to assist in eliminating many of the scourges that are prevalent in all societies, and which have a great impact on them.

Foreign occupation is a great obstacle to social development and social integration. We must stress here that Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan has led to the emigration of nearly half a million Syrian citizens from their territory. During that emigration, they suffered from poverty and various privations. Thus, many women became the breadwinners of their families after their husbands were martyred or arrested. Despite the State's efforts to ensure the minimum living requirements of these people, there is need for more resources, and more expansion of services. Every year Syria is obliged to assume greater responsibilities because of the Israeli occupation, which controls the natural resources of Golan, which it usurps and pillages. The occupation is creating and expanding settlements with the aim of changing the demographic character of the region. Thus the plans and programmes for economic and social development in my country are negatively impacted by this situation.

My delegation participated in the preparatory work for the special session to be held in the year 2000 to follow up the work done in Copenhagen, and we would stress here that we must at all costs see to it that the necessary consultations are completed in order to continue the preparations in complete transparency and with the participation of all in a constructive spirit so that the session will be a success.

This is particularly important since the session will be held at the dawn of a new millennium, which requires it to be a unique session characterized by its future impact on the lives and prosperity of peoples. We hope therefore that the commitments undertaken in Copenhagen will be met in order to ensure effective international cooperation.

We will agree that man's personality is the real wealth of any society, nation and humanity at large. Therefore, we need to take care of it, enable it to attain intellectual horizons and visions suitable for development, and to be coupled with values and ideals to protect it from degradation and delinquency. We should also bestow upon man's personality new skills which would make it capable of adapting to a changing environment and to help it interact with such changes in a positive manner.

All this means that we should act seriously to create a world where relations would be based on understanding and equality — relations that make it possible to create conditions of prosperity and happiness for people, away from poverty and injustice. Our striving should be for a world with no hegemony, colonialism or foreign occupation, a world where man would exercise his fundamental rights as one integrated unity of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights leading to his development and his preparation to play a positive role in society.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Abdel Aziz (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish at the outset to say that the delegation of Egypt endorses the statement made earlier by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The struggle to promote social development is an important objective in today's world. In addition, the support of efforts to attain social progress and justice,

and to improve the standard of living of people has become an urgent issue, in the light of the rising aspirations of people the world over, and their call for giving high priority to the social aspect of development. These elements are closely interrelated, and are affected by the broader range of social and economic questions, to the point of constituting a holistic and indivisible entity that can have either a positive or a negative impact on international stability, peace and security.

On this basis, Egypt recognizes the importance of social and economic issues, and, like other States that participated in the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, has committed itself to making every effort to confront problems in that sphere by creating an economic, political, social, cultural and ecological climate propitious for the attainment of social development, eradicating poverty, expanding employment, combating unemployment and fostering social integration.

Let me here stress two major points. We continue to stress the importance of being guided by them when dealing with questions relating to social development. First, we must respect different cultures and civilizations; nothing can justify imposing one's lifestyle on those who reject it or forcing one's practices on those who do not want them. Secondly, although we concede that the principal, central role in any process of social development should be played by individual Governments, it is also true that success in such governmental efforts depends on a favourable international environment, including factors such as trade, investment, the provision of financial resources, technical assistance and the transfer of technology.

In March, the Secretary-General addressed letters to heads of State or Government, in which, as quoted in paragraph 22 of document A/53/211, he stated that, despite efforts by many Governments to implement the decisions of the Summit, "poverty, unemployment and social disintegration continue to be desperately serious problems which tear at the social fabric of many countries and are often the source of persistent subregional and regional tensions".

On that basis, and at a time when we demand of ourselves and of other States to redouble our efforts in the economic and social sphere, we welcome the reference in the report of the Secretary-General to the continued strong commitment of many Governments to implementing the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit and to strengthening the political momentum achieved by that Summit in 1995, by moving forward in formulating national programmes, plans and strategies to promote social development through the elimination of poverty, the creation of jobs, fostering the development of human resources, creating social investment funds and devoting a larger portion of their budgets to the social sector.

In that connection, Egypt submitted a report on its national follow-up of the Copenhagen Summit to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-sixth session. Here, Egypt joined the rest of the international community in exchanging experiences and drawing lessons from one another in this area. Egypt reported that the main elements of its strategy are, first, to ensure as constant as possible an increase in development rates, and consistent support for our efforts in that regard, always mindful of the need to control and slow demographic growth. Secondly, we must make optimal use of all human potential without marginalizing any sector or group, stress human development and promote social consciousness. Thirdly, we must further strengthen democratic practices and maintain the continuity and stability of our constitutional institutions. In this context, we must be committed to legitimacy and the supremacy of law, and must endeavour to protect human rights and public and private freedoms in order to ensure that all citizens effectively participate in running their country's affairs and in decision-making, with a view to achieving social integration.

Let me make special reference to the problem of poverty, which poses one of the main challenges facing contemporary society. All Governments, and the international community as a whole, must redouble their efforts to address this challenge, especially as we are all committed to attaining the goal of eradicating poverty, as a moral, social, political, economic and human obligation incumbent upon us all. Egypt has begun to implement a whole series of integrated policy measures aimed at reducing poverty, promoting human development and achieving a 6 per cent a year increase in our gross national product by the year 2000.

Egypt has seen to it that those with limited incomes increase their participation in work and production through easy credit, professional training, fostering the role of volunteerism and civic society, and strengthening social safety-net — specifically our Social Development Fund. This Fund is no longer confined to minimizing the negative fallout from the economic and social reform process but now aims to support development in the areas of education, literacy, basic social and health services,

family planning, raising living standards and fighting unemployment.

As we begin preparing for a year 2000 special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, which Switzerland has made the generous offer to host, Egypt expresses the hope that the special session will be the focus of serious attention preparation and consensus-building by all to ensure its success. In that connection, we stress that the overriding objective of the session will not be to renegotiate the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, but to reaffirm them and to evaluate how far we have come in the process of implementing them. The main objective also includes the formulation of recommendations and concrete initiatives to bolster efforts aimed at the full implementation of the results of the Copenhagen Summit.

That will undoubtedly require joint efforts by all parties involved in the preparatory work for the session, at the national, the regional and the international levels. Here I must mention the critical role of all the bodies, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system in the preparations for the year 2000 special session. Nor should I omit mention of the important role of non-governmental organizations and civil society in general in following up and implementing the Copenhagen Programme of Action at the national and regional levels.

I wish in conclusion to reaffirm the importance of and interdependence of national, regional and international efforts aiming at bolstering social development in all forms and in all areas. We appeal to all States and Governments to fulfil their commitments in this regard, especially in the areas of mobilizing resources and providing technical assistance to developing countries. Social development is a collective international responsibility that has an impact on our lives and on the future of our world.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): The 1995 World Summit for Social Development showed that there was a global consensus that people must be at the centre of our development efforts and an acknowledgement of the close interlinkage between the social and the economic dimensions of development. A central aspect of that consensus is the importance of investing in people's health and education, not only for their own benefit but for the benefit of society at large. Norway is fully committed to the implementation of the outcome of the Summit through action at the local, national and international levels.

The goal of universal access to basic social services cuts across all three key objectives of the Social Summit. Healthy, educated people have a better chance for productive employment and sustainable livelihoods. Only by giving people an opportunity to lead healthy and productive lives can we help break the vicious circle of poverty. Providing access for all to basic education — not least of all for girls — is an effective way to promote social integration.

The Social Summit identified an instrument to facilitate joint action by developed and developing countries towards this goal: the 20/20 Initiative. Norway has taken a special interest in translating it into action. In April 1996, representatives of 38 Governments and 10 multilateral organizations met in Oslo to review strategies and modalities to implement this initiative. A comprehensive analysis of the 20/20 Initiative and its potential was undertaken, and the outcome of the meeting is reflected in the Oslo Consensus on 20/20.

Later this month, as mentioned by the representative of Viet Nam, government representatives and other key actors will again gather, in Hanoi, to take stock of the progress made since the Oslo meeting and to discuss ways and means of bringing the Initiative further ahead. Together with the Government of the Netherlands, we are pleased to sponsor the Hanoi meeting, and we hope that it will bring us closer to the goal of universal access to basic social services.

In addition to our mutual commitment along the lines of the 20/20 Initiative, another long-standing target needs a reaffirmed commitment by developed countries: the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance. It is regrettable that industrialized countries are increasingly distancing themselves from this target. Norway, which has been well above this target for decades, is actively seeking to counter the growing donor fatigue and intends to further increase its own official development assistance in the years ahead.

For the poorest and most heavily indebted developing countries the debt problem represents one of the main obstacles to development. Urgent action is needed to end the unsustainable debt burden of these countries. The Norwegian Government has launched a comprehensive national debt relief strategy as a contribution towards this end. Its objective is to enable these countries to enter the next millennium with a debt situation that is not an impediment to economic and social

development. The strategy includes concrete proposals on how Norway can support and strengthen multilateral mechanisms already in place. As part of the strategy, Norway will grant unilateral debt reductions on a case-by-case basis on top of the reductions made under multilateral operations.

The number of children being exploited through child labour seems to be on the increase. The girl child is particularly vulnerable, although her labour is often less visible. The financial crisis currently affecting many countries is magnifying the problem. The AIDS epidemic adds to this burden by leaving many children with an uncertain future as orphans needing to fend for themselves. These challenges need to be met by action. The Norwegian Government gives high priority to this work, which we see as both a human rights issue and a development issue.

Almost a year has passed since the International Conference on Child Labour in Oslo, where 40 countries agreed on an Agenda for Action on Child Labour. This Agenda points out a number of factors that can help eliminate child labour over time. Access to education, appropriate legislation and mobilization of civil society are all keys to bringing about change, as is support for community action designed to reduce the burdens of working children. We should now focus on how to promote and support the development of national plans of action in countries that experience child labour problems and that are committed to this process.

Enabling people with disabilities to participate fully and actively in society is an important part of our efforts to create a society for all. The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities is a key tool towards this end. Priority areas for action should be to ensure accessibility, equality and full participation in society for people with disabilities and to facilitate their participation in planning and policy-making.

The decision to designate 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons has been warmly welcomed in Norway, both by the Government and by the numerous Norwegian non-governmental organizations working in the field of older people. A national committee has been established. Some key topics for our celebration of the Year will be the rights of older people, appropriate care, lifelong learning and solidarity between generations.

Norway will take an active part in the preparatory process leading up to the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000. The purpose of the special session must be to review the implementation of the results of the Summit, but also to consider further actions and initiatives. In this process we must encourage contributions from all relevant actors, not least from the community of non-governmental organizations and other parts of civil society.

In his recent address to the General Assembly, our Secretary-General expressed his happiness about the fruitful cooperation over the past year between the United Nations and non-State actors, in particular in the processes leading up to the Convention on anti-personnel landmines and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. These positive experiences should be built upon in our preparations for the special session.

Mr. Bamba (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): I would like to state at the outset that Côte d'Ivoire associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

When the heads of State or Government adopted the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action in March 1995 no one could have predicted that a serious financial crisis linked to globalization, whose shock waves are still spreading, would completely call into question — at least as far as some countries are concerned — the reasonable expectations for economic growth and social progress.

The social consequences of this crisis are disastrous. Daily in the hardest hit countries 15,000 people are losing their jobs, thus swelling the ranks of the poor and the marginalized. Social safety nets, stretched to the limit, are proving unable to meet the growing needs of those stripped of their livelihood.

Faced with this unprecedented challenge, the developing countries, in particular those in Africa, are seeing the flow of external resources dry up, especially in terms of official development assistance, while the already unbearable external debt burden only grows heavier.

Such a situation is cause for concern and casts a pall of uncertainty over the commitments entered into at Copenhagen and at other major international conferences. We should not become discouraged, however. What we should do is review our strategies and attune our policies

in order to make the human person, more than ever, the focus of development.

My delegation in this connection pays tribute to the work of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund, which, by emphasizing the Human Development Index, have focused attention on social indicators such as education, health, drinking-water availability and improved basic social services. It is up all of us, together with the expertise of the bilateral and multilateral development agencies, to investigate ways of raising or at least maintaining the level of social indicators for our peoples.

Among the questions before our Assembly is one that we believe to be key: what measures we must envisage to weave a social safety net for our peoples in general, and for the most vulnerable among them in particular, in order to guarantee for them, the crisis notwithstanding, access to basic social services.

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire has always, in its efforts, placed the full development of people's potential at centre stage. The President of the Republic clearly spelled out this basic concern in his policy address of 26 August 1995:

> "To bring about a more homogenous society, in particular through steps designed to improve quickly and substantially the living conditions of the most disadvantaged in terms of housing, health, education and basic conditions of life in both rural and urban areas."

He is speaking here of the third track of the presidential programme, whose implementation resulted in increased social investment, reflecting the irrevocable commitment of our Government to reaching, for its part, the goals set at the Copenhagen Summit.

I would stress that the relevant steps are being taken within a well thought out framework that is based on a national programme to fight poverty adopted in June 1997.

In the educational field, the investment budget went from 16 billion CFA francs ($32 million) in 1992 to 35 billion CFA francs ($70 million) in 1997 — a nearly 100 per cent increase in the space of five years. It is noteworthy here that elementary school expenditures account for 45 per cent of the overall educational budget. Moreover, 968 elementary schoolrooms were built over the period 1993 through 1997, 49 per cent of them in rural areas. This resulted in an increase in the rate of enrolment from 67 per cent in 1992 to 72 per cent in 1997.

Altogether, for the period 1994 through 2001, we anticipate the construction of 5,000 new classrooms and the refurbishing of 6,000 more, requiring investments totalling almost 50 billion CFA francs ($100 million).

In the areas of housing and basic living conditions, the Government is undertaking to build low-income housing, rebuild run-down neighbourhoods and expand social infrastructures. These steps will be buttressed by a major housing programme, involving 12,000 low-income units, that will involve projects initiated by the Government and carried out by the private sector in 1998 and 1999.

At the village level, 1,330 housing units were built in 1997, versus 190 in 1994 and 1996.

As concerns hydraulics and the improvement of basic social services, we have acted to ensure a reliable supply of drinking water in both rural and urban areas. In urban areas, 37 drinking-water distribution centres were built from 1995 through 1997, and in rural areas 1,188 wells were drilled, resulting in one water-supply system for every 580 inhabitants.

In the health-care field, which has always been a priority concern for the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, a number of steps have been taken to improve our people's access to basic health care. The strategy designed to translate all of this into reality involves the continued restoration of existing infrastructures and the construction of new health centres. As a result, three major university and regional hospital centres were refurbished and equipped, and some 40 new dispensaries were built in the capital as well as in the rest of the country.

Moreover, these steps are being complemented on the one hand by the implementation and restructuring of major health programmes concerning, *inter alia*, AIDS, an expanded vaccination programme, Buruli's ulcer and Guinea worm, and on the other hand stepped-up training for health-care personnel.

Since 1994 the public funds allocated to health care have consistently increased, reaching 99 billion CFA francs ($198 million) in 1997. The result of this policy has been a significant improvement in nationwide health care coverage, as the following figures demonstrate.

There was one rural dispensary for every 9,331 inhabitants in 1997, as against one for every 11,931 in 1994 — an increase in the number of dispensaries from 532 to 750 for the period in question. There was also one maternity hospital for every 8,613 women of childbearing age in 1997, versus one for every 15,394 in 1994, reflecting an increase in the number of such facilities from 190 to 384 for that period. Furthermore, there is now one physician for every 9,000 inhabitants, versus one for every 11,111 in 1988. And the immunization rate went from 60 per cent in 1996 to 70 per cent in 1997, which trend should allow us by the year 2000 to wipe out polio and neonatal tetanus as well as to check the spread of leprosy.

Our Government's efforts also have centred not only on regularly supplying public health facilities with medication but also on driving down the cost of that medication, in particular by promoting generic medicines, increasing medication imports and facilitating the establishment of pharmaceutical plants.

Given the current globalization-dominated context, which I have already touched on, Côte d'Ivoire does not intend to wage alone the fight to improve our people's health. On the contrary, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire is determined to wage that fight within the framework of an active regional solidarity and international cooperation.

This determination reaches the very highest level, as demonstrated by the personal involvement of the head of State of Côte d'Ivoire, who himself has launched several initiatives and taken a number of steps towards better health in Africa and throughout the world.

President Bédié, who was Africa's representative at the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the World Health Organization, in addressing that body called to mind the serious economic and financial crisis and its unfavourable impact on the social sectors in general and on health in particular. He listed the health-care challenges facing Africa, stressing major new problems such as AIDS and Buruli's ulcer. Finally he exhorted all countries to endeavour in a spirit of national and international solidarity so that better health for all in the twenty-first century can become a reality.

He also highlighted the connection between poverty and health; the impact of globalized trade and of technology on health; the effectiveness of cooperation in the field of international health care and how non-health-related factors impede the advancement of health care at the international level; the relationship between health and development; and the relationship between the free-market system and universal access to care.

Another example of Côte d'Ivoire's commitment to better health at the regional level was the initiative of the Ivorian President at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in June 1998 in Ougadougou to propose the creation of an African fund to fight AIDS and to take all necessary steps to ensure the launching of the African initiative against malaria. The heads of State or Government of the OAU hailed this initiative and adopted two resolutions designed to step up the fight against these two major scourges that are visiting suffering and death upon Africa.

So far as the difficulties Africans face in obtaining anti-retrovirus treatment, the Ivorian President called attention to the fact that it is a flagrant injustice that access to such treatments varies according to the level of economic development. Chosen along with Uganda, Chile and Viet Nam to participate in the pilot phase of the UNAIDS initiative regarding access to anti-retrovirus treatments, Côte d'Ivoire has tirelessly sought to win over new partners, such as the European Union and major pharmaceutical companies of the northern hemisphere. These efforts, combined with those of other development partners made possible the launching of the initiative in August of this year.

As a sign of its commitment, Côte d'Ivoire has established a fund of 600 million CFA francs for the initiative. Thus, in conjunction with other African countries and development partners, we have prepared the way to fight with new vigour and solidarity against this disease, the diverse effects of which spare no nation.

African countries must be assisted in their efforts to ensure the provision of basic social services and to live up to the commitments they made at the Social Summit: to wipe out poverty, fight unemployment and ensure the social integration of marginalized people.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reaffirm here the appeal the Secretary-General made to the member States of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development — to take vigorous action for Africa in the following five priority areas: first, increasing the volume and quality of official development assistance to Africa; secondly, converting into grants the entire outstanding balance of the official debts of the poorest African countries; thirdly, expanding access to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative;

fourthly, opening markets to African exports and facilitating African countries' access to them; and fifthly, encouraging investment in Africa.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): The 1995 World Summit for Social Development can be put on the list of major global events of the last decade. It was at that forum that concrete targets and collective commitments aimed at ensuring social progress and better living conditions were defined. The commitments made in Copenhagen represent solemn pledges which, though not legally binding, constitute strong ethical and moral imperatives.

The statements made yesterday and today by previous speakers have vividly demonstrated the continued adherence of Member States to the fulfilment of obligations they undertook in Copenhagen. At the same time, many representatives outlined problems and difficulties that prove that the follow-up to the 1995 World Summit has been far from satisfactory.

In his letter to the Secretary-General in May this year, the President of Ukraine shared the Secretary-General's concern that

> "poverty, unemployment and social disintegration continue to be desperately serious problems which tear at the social fabric of many countries and are often the source of persistent subregional and regional tensions". (*A/53/211, para. 22*)

To address these problems effectively, the President of Ukraine emphasized that much more was required, through national action as well as international cooperation.

It was widely acknowledged in the course of the recent general debate that the main feature of the present stage of development of the world community is the globalization of political, social, economic and humanitarian life. On the one hand, recent years have been marked by some of the negative effects of globalization. The financial crises in Asia and in Russia, whose repercussions have been acutely felt all over the world, serve as the most recent example of this.

On the other hand, a great advantage of globalization is the opportunity to share experiences and to learn from each other's achievements and difficulties, to promote an exchange of new ideas and to resolve problems of individual regions and countries by taking advantage of the world's best experience.

The special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives, to be held in the year 2000, will become a timely test for all of us as regards the capability of the international community as a whole and of individual Member States to respond effectively to the challenges of today.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General, in document A/53/211, and fully support the opinion that, among the main goals of the special session should be to reaffirm and not to renegotiate the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as to review their implementation since 1995. While assessing national, regional and global initiatives elaborated in this regard, the special session should pay additional attention to the impact of globalization; to an integrated approach to poverty eradication; to the promotion of full employment and of social integration based on the enhancement and protection of human rights; and to the creation of an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that would enable people to enhance their social development.

In our opinion, the organizational session of the Preparatory Committee for the special session has laid down a good basis for further work in this direction. Our delegation is pleased by the growing role in this process of the Commission for Social Development. We would also like to note the combined efforts aimed at streamlining the Summit follow-up made by the wide range of different bodies of the United Nations system — in particular, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the Bretton Woods institutions — as well as the active involvement of non-governmental organizations to this end.

We welcome the initiative of the Government of Switzerland to host the special session in the year 2000 in Geneva. We also highly appreciate its readiness to assist those countries that do not have representatives in Geneva.

The implementation of the decisions of the Copenhagen Summit remains a very important component of Ukraine's strategy in the area of social development. The President and the Government of Ukraine are making every effort to ensure the successful realization of the relevant national programme and of a number of legislative acts. The objective is to create a system of

social relationships adapted to the current market conditions and environment; promote social integration, social justice, equal rights and opportunities for all; and ensure the rights of national minorities. The most recent step towards this end is the establishment of the national committee in charge of the implementation of the goals of the International Year of Older Persons.

The Government of Ukraine continues to focus its efforts on solving the problems of youth, women, children, the disabled and other vulnerable groups of the population, who should not be consigned to the margins of society by the social and economic difficulties of an economy in transition.

Ukraine will continue to strictly adhere to its Copenhagen commitments and will take an active part in the process of preparing for the special session of the General Assembly.

We believe that the consolidation of efforts by all Member States aimed at overcoming the existing problems and at creating an environment for further economic and social progress will help achieve the goals of the World Social Summit. In this regard, I would like to quote the well-known British statesman and novelist, Benjamin Disraeli, who wrote more than a century ago, "The secret of success is constancy to purpose." We are persistent in our will to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Copenhagen Summit in the interests of and to the benefit of the whole of humankind.

Mr. Shahid (Bangladesh): The international community identified ways and means of addressing the challenges of social development at the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1995. We now look forward to the year 2000, when we shall review the progress achieved in implementing the outcome of the Summit.

The current global economic instability has had adverse consequences for societies. Measures for attaining social development have stalled as a result. The least developed countries have suffered most. Their inadequate resource base has put them in a most difficult situation to continue their efforts for social development. Social disintegration, endemic poverty, lack of employment and weak safety nets for vulnerable groups such as women, children and the elderly have compounded the problem further. Their collective impact may result in a developmental crisis which will hurt the weak and the marginalized.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. We fully endorse the statement of the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Given the time constraint, we would like to flag a few issues of specific concern to us.

First, it is clear that although measures have been taken at the national, regional and international levels, much more remains to be done for the complete implementation of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit. The Secretary-General also raised this matter in his report. We believe that the best way to progress is to ensure that social issues are not overshadowed by economic ones, given the present global financial instability. We must not sacrifice those at the periphery in our efforts to engineer a speedy global economic revival.

Secondly, for implementing the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit at the national level, innovative measures are needed. In our efforts for poverty eradication and social development, we have seen the usefulness of micro-credit as a tool. It has not only addressed issues of poverty, but by increasing economic activity, it has also generated employment. By empowering women, it has had a number of fallout effects, including better sanitation and hygiene, increase in the number of schoolgoing children and more caloric intake.

Thirdly, while it is primarily the responsibility of national Governments to implement the commitments made at the Summit, it is also clear that without international cooperation and assistance, it will not be possible to do so. The United Nations has a critical role to play in this regard, and the Secretary-General's report highlights the United Nations system-wide follow-up to the Summit in this regard. We believe that the United Nations must focus on inter-agency cooperation to address the issues in a focused manner, avoid duplication and increase the allocation of resources for country level and regional level follow-up and implementation. All relevant organizations of the United Nations system should also prioritize their respective programmes with the objective of the speedy implementation of the outcome.

Fourthly, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund must prioritize social development and allocate substantial resources for this purpose. If the

social sectors are neglected, the result will be social strife and unrest, which may result in more instability.

Fifthly, the participation of civil society as partners of Governments will significantly contribute to the implementation of the commitments made at Copenhagen. The grass-roots approach of civil society will complement the Government's role of policy-setting, coordination and overall supervision of the implementation process. A strong and accountable civil society can greatly help reduce poverty, create employment and increase social cohesion.

Before concluding, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives in the year 2000. We also thank the Government of Switzerland for its offer to hold the special session in the year 2000 in Geneva.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation wishes to associate itself fully with the statement made by the representative of the Group of 77 and China.

As I emphasized yesterday in the Third Committee, the question of social development is one of the major issues facing humanity in the last years of this century. It will be one of the vital priorities of the international community at the beginning of the twenty-first century, precisely because social issues are people, and people are at the beginning and at the end of any concept of development.

The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995, rallied a broad consensus around the essential need to refocus national priorities and the agenda of our Organization on questions of human development. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action on Social Development adopted at the Summit remain today our common reference points for elaborating and implementing social policies. Given their relevance and their timeliness, made even more obvious today by the financial crisis in Asia and its unexpected repercussions in other parts of the world, Senegal does not believe that they need to be renegotiated.

As the Preparatory Committee for the special session in the year 2000 recommends, we need to reaffirm the Copenhagen consensus, critically to assess its implementation and adopt concrete and pragmatic recommendations conducive to the effective and coordinated implementation of the 10 commitments undertaken by our Governments.

My delegation is pleased by the high quality of the reports submitted to us on the preparation for the special session in the year 2000 on follow-up to Copenhagen. The Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit and the report of the Preparatory Committee convinced me that the United Nations is determined to do everything to assure that Copenhagen +5 does not become a replay of the Summit, but that it should serve as a spearhead for giving new impetus to the process already under way to effectively implement the Declaration and Programme of Action.

In this respect, my delegation welcomes the offer made by the Government of Switzerland to host the special session in the year 2000 at Geneva. My country enjoys excellent relations with the Government of Switzerland and is convinced that that friendly country will do its all to ensure that the special session convenes in the best possible conditions.

The social crisis that arose in the early 1990s, and the anxiety and sense of impotence it provoked, made it necessary for the States Members of the United Nations to convene the World Summit for Social Development. Despite the scope of measures adopted three years ago, it has become clear today that poverty, far from diminishing, has increased in certain countries or regions of the world, in the South and the North alike. Social conflicts have not ebbed. Social insecurity, fear for the future and the shortage or absence of jobs, particularly for the young, remain major concerns for all our countries. The gap is widening between rich and poor countries and, within the wealthy countries, between rich and poor citizens. The solution to social problems is beyond the means and measures of any single Government alone. Official development assistance is plummeting from year to year. The goal of integrating women and the elderly as full members of society remains unattained. The vulnerability of children and the failure to take into account their rights, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, remains a serious challenge to the entire international community.

The picture I have just painted is reflected in various documents of the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development and in other studies conducted by United Nations agencies. The picture is hardly pretty, especially since, in some regions of the world, particularly in Africa, civil wars and other inter-

State conflicts are creating tens of thousands, even tens of millions, of newly marginalized people.

The *Human Development Report 1998* states that more than a billion people are unable to meet their basic consumption needs, that 60 per cent of the 4.5 billion inhabitants of the developing countries are without basic health facilities and that almost a third of these have no access to drinking water.

Humanity only raises problems that it can resolve and I have no doubt that it does have the resources necessary to defeat malnutrition and hunger, to guarantee a decent life to every man and woman, and to build a balanced society of mutual assistance and solidarity. The international community has the means to do this. It has the ability to do this. It must have the generosity to do this.

Even if the primary responsibility for implementing the outcome of Copenhagen falls first to each Government, it is highly important that the United Nations, through its system, and other development partners strengthen their assistance to poor countries. I know that the United Nations Development Programme, like the World Bank, is currently seeking to refocus its activities on poverty eradication, while taking into account other important programming sectors, such as gender parity, productive employment, good governance, sustainable development and the conservation and improvement of the environment.

Other funds, programmes and agencies, as well as numerous non-governmental organizations, are also striving, in their respective fields of competence, to implement the outcome of Copenhagen by reorienting and refocusing their activities on questions of vulnerability, social integration and poverty eradication.

It is therefore important, in this dynamic context, that emphasis be placed on national and local capacity-building, promoting productive employment and lowering unemployment, promoting a micro-credit system, and improving access to basic social services for all. In a word, greater priority must be placed on promoting social investments and the social dimension of adjustment and economic, monetary and financial restructuring programmes.

My country, Senegal, which enjoys excellent cooperation with the United Nations system, has drafted, in cooperation with its development partners, a national poverty eradication programme. We are trying to implement it with our own budgetary resources and those provided by friendly countries and international institutions. The strategic guidelines of Senegal's ninth national plan for economic and social development gives priority national interest to poverty eradication. Poverty and its eradication remain major challenges that must be met during the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

To that end, we must develop an integrated and innovative holistic approach that takes into due account the role of values in formulating national social policy. Ultimately, we must develop and implement a political culture of social progress, peace and democracy.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to express the hope that the special session to be held in the year 2000 will help us to attain this noble goal, which we all share.

Mr. Al-Humaimidi (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to join those who supported the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Iraq has always been keen on participating in the deliberations under this agenda item for many reasons. First and foremost, this item is of particular interest and importance to developing countries because it relates to an important part of the process of comprehensive development. Furthermore, Iraq faces a critical situation brought about by the harsh circumstances resulting from the economic sanctions which have been in effect for over eight years. Because of this, the development process in Iraq has faced many burdens. This is because Iraq must respond to the traditional tasks required by the development process in any developing country, while at the same time devising plans to alleviate the destructive effects of the sanctions in all areas of life.

At its fifty-second session the General Assembly affirmed the need for renewed political will on the national, regional and international levels to realize the goals of social development. Governments were urged to put in place or promote comprehensive strategies to implement the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. In this respect, we must emphasize some important facts. Realization of development requires the provision of two critical and basic elements, as well as the political will of the State and its genuine desire to realize development. These factors are financial resources and international cooperation. Because of the acts of aggression committed against Iraq on 17 September 1991 and because of the continued economic embargo against

it, Iraq has been deprived of financial resources. On the other hand, the sanctions have created basic obstacles at the level of international economic and developmental cooperation. Thus, Iraq has been deprived of all basic factors needed for any development, irrespective of shape or size.

Undoubtedly the rights to health and education are the cornerstones of social development. Without preserving and developing these cornerstones, no country can claim to have taken important steps on the road of social development. In this context, I wish to address some facts concerning the health and economic situation in Iraq. The ongoing embargo has led to a deterioration in health services in terms of prevention and treatment, particularly with regard to programmes of primary medical care, nutrition, maternity, prenatal care, combating disease, environmental health, family care and planning, social psychological care and special programmes for the disabled. In the area of family planning, the reproductive health project was adversely affected by the failure to date to provide the special equipment needed and provided for by the International Family Planning Federation to the Iraqi Society for Family Planning of 1997.

It has been impossible to provide more than 18 per cent of the services needed by the target audience, representing the sector which is most in need of services in the field of family planning and reproductive health. In addition, there has been a sharp decline in the level of services because of the near total destruction of clean water systems and pumping stations in the war. What remained was eventually destroyed because of the embargo, due to the lack of spare parts needed to maintain those stations and the scarcity of chlorine and other purifiers.

As regards education, this sector has also deteriorated because of the shortage in the most rudimentary requirements for education. There is a shortage of pencils used by students in their studies. There is a shortage of over 650,000 desks because there are no raw materials to make them. We have also have shortages in schoolbooks, of which 40 million are needed. More than 9,000 schools require restoration or maintenance. Other needs are also difficult to provide, like writing boards, chalk and notebooks. Due to the ongoing embargo, the expansion plan for school construction, which included building 3,973 new schools between 1990 and 1996, came to a complete halt. All of this has led to a widespread drop-out rate and to other behaviour problems. More than 500,000 students have dropped out of schools since 1995. The number of those who have deserted the education workforce has reached 12,373.

Because of the ongoing embargo there are also new challenges that women must face, the most important of which is having to provide for their families and catering to their needs by doing marginal non-productive work. That has adversely affected women's productive social activities outside the home and has led to a deterioration in their societal role.

These are some of the symptoms that prevent the realization of social development in Iraq. It should be mentioned here that resolution 52/136 reaffirmed the importance of the right to development as an integral part of fundamental human rights for every human person and for all peoples in all countries, particularly the developing countries. The resolution calls on all Member States to make further concrete efforts at the national and international levels to eliminate all obstacles to the realization of the right to development.

Accordingly, the international community, which took upon itself a commitment under the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action to promote a world environment favourable to realizing social development, is duty-bound to address the destructive direct or indirect effects of sanctions on the economic and social infrastructures of targeted countries, where the first victim is the development process, particularly as we are about to evaluate the achievements and follow up the results of the Copenhagen Summit. The first step towards the realization of social development in Iraq must be the lifting of the economic sanctions that have no legal, humanitarian or ethical justification whatsoever, particularly since Iraq has fulfilled all its obligations under the Security Council resolutions. This will enable Iraq to provide the necessary elements that will lead to accelerated and comprehensive social development. Iraq will then be able to compensate for the destructive effects of the embargo.

Mr. Samhan Al-Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I have the pleasure, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, to join those who have spoken before me in addressing my thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General. Indeed, his report on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995 is replete with invaluable signposts which provide a useful framework for our deliberations. I would also like to express my support for the statements on these issues

made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Social Summit marked a milestone in relationships of international cooperation for development, offering the world an overall vision of the multidimensional nature of world social development on the eve of the twenty-first century. Notwithstanding the commitments made by heads of State or Government that found their way into the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in Copenhagen, which included a priority list of actions to be taken collectively by the international community to ensure social integration, prosperity and happiness, the efforts exerted up to now at national, regional and international levels through the Economic and Social Council and various international programmes, as well as through the Commission for Social Development to ensure proper follow-up on these priorities, have not yet achieved the qualitative shift desired for the improvement in the social situation of the world today. The world situation today has resulted from the widening economic, social and cultural gap between developed and developing countries.

The advantages of globalization and liberalization of economies which have marked international relations in recent years are still beyond attainment for most peoples of developing countries. This is due to their growing exposure to the problems of malnutrition, disease, unemployment, serious ecological crises, the external debt burden, violence, drug abuse, discrimination and injustice, as well as the many other challenges of deep poverty which afflict the 1.3 billion people who lack the simplest and most elementary social services, such as basic food supplies, drinking water, housing, safety, health, education, security and the like.

The delegation of the United Arab Emirates has fully supported follow-through on the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in Copenhagen, which, as we see it, reflects a pragmatic approach needed to ensure increased worldwide awareness of the nature of these social problems at present. My delegation feels, accordingly, that an across-the-board implementation of this programme requires us to take a determined approach in international and regional cooperative relations in order to adopt better policies for social development based upon concepts of genuine partnership and of burden-sharing within their larger scopes. Thus will we be able to expand development aid for developing countries and arrangements for the exchange of scientific and technological experiences, and for trade and investment, either through bilateral or multilateral channels. This will contribute to enabling the developing countries to improve their ability to deal successfully with the globalization of development. In this context, we should also call for joining our efforts to create the appropriate machinery to address our shared concerns relating to the family, children, women, the aged, the handicapped, the provision of proper educational and health services and the like.

It is our feeling that the armed conflicts afflicting many different parts of the world are serious challenges to social development. Indeed, they are a major source of the proliferation of many other complex transnational problems, such as organized crime, illegal trafficking in arms and narcotic drugs, money-laundering and the like. We therefore support the recommendations of the Commission for Social Development designed to strengthen international partnership in order to meet these challenges. This would be accomplished through finding alternative ways to development, developing human resources and a productive workforce, reducing unemployment and improving the quality of social services for all sectors of societies, on the basis of sustainability and justice.

We look forward to the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 to take stock of the achievements in following through on Copenhagen. In this connection, we stress the need and importance of strengthening the role played by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in dealing more effectively with these areas, especially the humanitarian, economic and social arenas.

The United Arab Emirates participated actively in the World Summit in Copenhagen and, in response to the recommendations of that important conference, has been keen on strengthening our national development strategies and updating some of our legislation and developmental and social activities. All this is in keeping with our aspirations to develop our human resources and to ensure a decent living standard for the individual as a maker and beneficiary of development. In this respect, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, head of State of the United Arab Emirates, has expressed our determination to improve health services, training and education and to implement programmes for social interdependence to help the handicapped, orphans and the aged and to ensure that they are better integrated into the mainstream of society. These programmes will also improve their participation in building society, while strengthening the concepts of family and societal unity and cohesion, taking account of

the particularities of our own customs and the traditions of our heritage and the teachings of Islam.

By the same token, our Government has made a point of giving women a unique place in the realm of national development, because they are the pillars of our society. We have also sought to strengthen grass-roots and community-based partnership, especially between public interest and private sector organizations, in the implementation of many policies and national programmes. This is in addition to the provision of job opportunities on an equitable basis to men and women alike. We are pursuing implementation of our plans to develop remote rural areas and link them to urban areas by providing them with electric power, water, adequate housing and the like across our country.

We are also working hand in hand with bilateral, regional and international partners in development. Thus, we have contributed to financing many socio-economic development projects in a number of other developing countries, granting some of them concessionary loans to enable them, in turn, to meet their own needs for basic social services. We have also hosted a number of international colloquiums, seminars, conferences and training workshops designed to deal with social, environmental, housing and other developmental issues.

In conclusion, we believe that social development is a firm commitment which has been affirmed by various covenants and agreements, foremost among which is the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We must take concerted action to realize the aspirations expressed in the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, which are designed to bring about justice and to improve the lot of many millions of people throughout the world.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): As this is the first time that I have had the honour of addressing the General Assembly at this session, I would like to take this opportunity to express my congratulations to Minister Didier Opertti upon his election. I am confident that he will very successfully guide the deliberations of the Assembly.

The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, was the first major United Nations conference specifically on social development issues. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the Summit represent a new consensus on the need to put people at the centre of development. It was the largest ever gathering of world leaders with the common goal of addressing social issues, fighting poverty, creating productive jobs and making a stable, safe and just society. The presence of 117 heads of State or Government gave immense political weight to the final conclusions.

The Summit's goals of eliminating inequality within and among States were designed to create stability and security in the world, which would lead to lasting peace. In this noble endeavour it is necessary to focus not only on social and economic development but on the full spectrum of development, which includes full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In this light, it should be noted that social development requires an integrated approach and involves implementation of the conclusions of all the global conferences — those of Rio, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul.

At this juncture, almost four years after the holding of the Social Summit, we need to seriously evaluate whether enough has been done to implement the commitments made at the Summit, as well as to explore ways to proceed further in order to accomplish the goals set at Copenhagen.

Social problems are still spread across the entire world, and it is obvious that they cannot be the exclusive responsibility of national Governments. Rather, they require global attention and action. Not even the most developed States are immune to the problems of social development, poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. Some countries can cope with those problems on their own, but most need the assistance and cooperation of the international community.

Unfortunately, while there have been some national and collective efforts, including those of the United Nations system, to fulfil the commitments made in Copenhagen, much remains to be done. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General,

> "it is clear that far more extensive and effective action is required at the international, regional and national levels to tackle the desperately serious problems of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration faced by most countries". (*A/53/211, para. 78*)

Let me reiterate that it states "by most countries".

Poverty, instead of being reduced, has actually increased since the holding of the Summit. In addition, only a handful of countries have achieved or surpassed the target of applying 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance, as called for in Copenhagen.

Although we are well aware that it is the least developed countries which need the greatest assistance for social development, countries with economies in transition also require international cooperation. The changes in the economic system in these countries affected all other aspects of social development and increased unemployment and poverty among certain segments of society. We wish to stress that dissatisfaction and frustration in these countries could eventually exact a much higher price from the international community than the amount of temporary assistance now needed to put economic and social development in those countries on the right track.

From the point of view of the flow of international assistance, the Republic of Croatia, as a Central European and Mediterranean country, should belong to the category of donor States. However, the costs and consequences not only of transition but also of the war of aggression which was conducted against it were such that Croatia is still not in a position to assume that role.

On the national level, the Republic of Croatia has undertaken numerous measures designed to implement the commitments of the Social Summit. Croatia has instituted a National Employment Policy, which consists of various measures designed to decrease unemployment and underemployment, decrease labour costs, increase labour mobility and improve cooperation between the Government, employers and the unions in creating jobs.

The policy includes activities by the National Employment Agency, in cooperation with employers, to organize training programmes for the unemployed in line with the needs of, and changes in, the labour market. Attention is being paid to the needs of specific groups, such as the young and long-term unemployed. In keeping with the Summit's goal of equalizing opportunities for people with disabilities, the National Employment Agency has special programmes for the disabled. The policy also includes measures to stimulate self-employment by providing credit, organizing seminars on establishing a business and providing analysis of the lines of business which provide the best opportunities for self-employment in various localities.

In keeping with the Social Summit's commitment to equality for women, the Croatian Government has established the National Policy for the Promotion of Equality. As part of this policy, measures have been established which are to be undertaken by the year 2000 by Government bodies, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, for the purpose of improving the economic position of women and their greater participation at all levels of political life. This also constitutes implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The Croatian Government has also established the National Programme of Action for Children. The eventual goals of this programme are to guarantee free and healthy food for children under three years old in pre-school programmes, to eliminate taxes for children's clothing and food and to ensure adequate living conditions for all families. In the field of health, the programme is designed to provide free health care for children and special departments and services for child rehabilitation, especially for those children with developmental problems. In addition, health guidance clinics for children are to be established, and the Government will actively promote the healthy upbringing of children and young people.

The National Programme of Action for Children, in conjunction with the National Employment Policy and special measures for the advancement, upbringing, education and social security of children, is designed to help eliminate poverty, one of the major aims of the Summit.

In meeting its commitments made at Copenhagen, as well as facilitating its social development, Croatia will be greatly assisted by the scheduled pledging conference for development and reconstruction, which the international community is planning to conduct in Croatia.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that increasing global interdependence requires increased international solidarity to fulfil the commitments of the Social Summit to eradicate poverty, provide productive employment and promote social integration.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of the Philippines.

Mrs. Lacanlale (Philippines): When our leaders crafted the landmark document on social development in March 1995 at the Copenhagen Summit, they already

envisioned a review mechanism to ensure full implementation of commitments. Thus, General Assembly resolution 50/161 of 22 December 1995 simply mirrored that sentiment when it decided to hold a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. And our Heads of States or Governments expect no less than the plenary of the Assembly to take full charge in ensuring adequate preparations for a successful review session in the year 2000.

My delegation is fully satisfied with the preparations undertaken thus far. The Assembly has laid out clearly in its resolutions 51/202 and 52/25 the principal considerations that should guide the preparatory process and the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000.

We fully agree that the mandated role of the Commission for Social Development should remain intact and that, as a functional Commission of the Economic and Social Council, it has the primary responsibility for the follow-up to the Summit and review of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. We are gratified to note that the Commission for Social Development has indeed discharged its mandate accordingly and that a practical link has been established through the designation of its Chairman as ex officio in the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee.

My delegation expects that on the basis of various inputs, particularly from the Commission for Social Development, the Preparatory Committee could then initiate its substantive activities in 1999. In this regard, it is critical to ensure that agreed conclusions of the Commission, particularly on the priority themes for 1998 on promoting social integration and participation of all people, including the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons, and on the priority themes for 1999 on social services for all, find concrete expression in enriching the preparatory process for the special session.

It is equally important that the international community continue to address the two other core issues on poverty and unemployment to ensure that the pertinent commitments made at the Copenhagen Summit are fulfilled and that countries are indeed serious in meeting their respective obligations under the Declaration and Programme of Action.

The preparatory process should, at the same time, seek more opportunities that can bring about the implementation of commitments made at Copenhagen. It must not be limited to activities or meetings which are, by themselves, part and parcel of the preparatory process. Supportive meetings and other related activities must be organized to raise awareness for the immediate implementation of commitments made at Copenhagen. Such support activities could highlight the role of the United Nations system and the participation of non-governmental organizations, as well as civil society. Relevant national or regional activities could also be arranged and coordinated to ensure maximum political momentum for the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. The Secretariat should be able to provide the required assistance for the arrangement and coordination of such activities.

It is clear to us that the principal objective of the special session is to reaffirm and not to renegotiate the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. The special session can then review the implementation of the Declaration and the Programme of Action and recommend further concrete actions and initiatives that will contribute to a full and effective implementation of commitments. This Assembly must confirm such an understanding lest we put the preparatory process and the special session in disarray. The decisions adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its organizational meeting in May this year were very explicit in this regard.

It is very important that Member countries accord the fullest support to the work of the Preparatory Committee to ensure adequate preparation for the special session of the General Assembly. This means that Member States should be actively involved in the Commission for Social Development, since this is the body that will carry most of the burden in initiating substantive inputs for the Preparatory Committee. The Commission has been entrusted with the responsibility of acting as the forum for national reporting and for identifying areas where further initiatives are needed for consideration by the Preparatory Committee.

We also expect the Commission to have the first opportunity to examine the various inputs requested from the Secretary-General in the decisions adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its organizational session. I refer to the general guidelines, structure and common framework for national reporting which the Secretary-General was requested to formulate. I also refer to a report focusing on the implementation of the 10

commitments, including the three core issues, at the national, regional and international levels, which will be made available to the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee from 17 to 28 May 1999. The thirty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development in February 1999 must have every opportunity to examine such reports so that appropriate inputs are subsequently provided to the Preparatory Committee.

My delegation hopes that the requested reports are completed in due time and that delegations are given an opportunity to examine them so that effective contributions are made to the work of the Commission for Social Development and, subsequently, to the Preparatory Committee.

It is obvious that far more extensive and effective action is required at the international, regional, and national levels to confront the serious problems of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. It is also clear that countries must do more to be faithful to what they have committed themselves to at Copenhagen.

The developing countries have done the best they could under trying conditions — underdevelopment, the debilitating burden of external indebtedness and other serious setbacks to their economies. My country is doing its part. The Philippine Government has consolidated and focused its poverty alleviation efforts into a social reform agenda. Among its key thrusts are convergence and focus in the delivery of social services, asset reform and sustainable development of productive resources, institution building and participatory governance. To guide our focus, we are employing a 33-point minimum basic needs indicator system. This comprehensive survey has so far been put in place in all of our 77 provinces, in almost two thirds of our 1,539 municipalities, and more than a third of our 41,000 villages or barangays.

We intend to persist in our efforts despite the aggravating circumstances that have been brought about by the financial turbulence in our region. We also expect the international community to manifest its solidarity with us through concrete steps, including those that are directly responsive to the commitments made at Copenhagen.

We see the preparatory process and the special session itself as a validation of the required courses of action agreed upon at the Social Summit. We see it as a recommitment to a global vision of sustained and broad-based developments, where equity and justice prevail worldwide.

And in the midst of the current economic difficulties in our part of the world, we appeal to the international community that now is the time to redouble our efforts to fully implement the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Sudan.

Mr. Ahmed (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish at the outset to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his effort in preparing the report, contained in document A/53/211 of 6 August 1998, on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. My delegation also wants to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, in which he stressed the importance of promoting both North-South and South-South cooperation to foster social development. Everyone has praised United Nations efforts in this sphere.

By giving special attention to the social dimension of development, we are affirming the human aspect of development. In the past, efforts were concentrated on the economic aspects of development. We are happy to recall the sponsorship by the United Nations in the 1980s of a successful meeting at Khartoum on the human aspects of development. Efforts then continued, culminating in Copenhagen in March 1995 with the World Summit for Social Development.

In studying the report of the Secretary-General, we took particular note of part IV, entitled "Priority theme for 1998: promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons: thirty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development". This theme, which includes the concept of the provision of social services for all, is discussed in paragraphs 16 to 19 of the report.

In this connection, my country, the Republic of Sudan, has entered upon a pioneering experience in the area of social integration by creating a number of social defence funds to help the poor and to provide them with resources enabling them to work in professions and in light industry, while covering their medical expenses. We have also created financial assistance funds for university students to help them afford accommodation and meet

other basic needs. In addition, we have set up projects during the academic vacations under the theme of "A productive student".

In connection with student aid, we want to highlight our Government's efforts to broaden the educational base of our people, out of our belief in the principle of education for all. In this context, our Government has established 23 universities throughout Sudan, where there were only 5 before it came to power.

As part of the Government's efforts to ensure social integration, public and private institutions have developed the idea of holding collective marriage ceremonies to help men and women meet their marriage costs. This represents a contribution towards their stability, and a reinforcement of the family stability that is encouraged by the precepts of Islam, which is the cornerstone of our society. I particularly remember a collective marriage ceremony organized by a government agency for a group of disabled people, a ceremony which left its impact on the members of that group, by making them part of the fabric of an integrated society.

We all believe that people are the basic focus and the purpose of development; they are also the means to that development. People live in different environments and different cultures. Thus, it has become difficult to impose a single development model on all societies. For that reason, my delegation believes that we must reflect the cultural, social and religious diversity of all countries as we strive to attain realistic and objective social development, without imposing a single model on everyone. In the light of that conviction, we call upon all members of the international community to work together to realize that principle of social development, which we have sought for so long through North-South and South-South participation and partnership.

We are making enormous efforts to further social and economic development in the face of foreign pressures. The recent aggression by the United States against a pharmaceuticals factory in my country is but the latest example. We also face domestic problems such as a civil war, which was imposed upon southern Sudan and which caused an exodus by hundreds of thousands of people from the south to the north. This placed a heavy burden on our economic resources and our social services. Despite all these factors, my Government has made valuable efforts in this regard, which have won commendation from the United Nations and other organizations.

Something else that affects our economic and social development is the influx of thousands of refugees from neighbouring countries. As it faces that burden, my country has decided to hold, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, a meeting of Foreign Ministers of African countries in December at Khartoum, to consider and seek to resolve problems related to refugees and displaced persons, in order to create an environment in which all African countries can enjoy economic and social development.

We wish in conclusion to reaffirm our support for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit. Like other speakers, we are of the view that the session should reaffirm the conclusions of the Copenhagen Summit, and should not reopen debate on matters already agreed upon. We believe that all parties, especially donor countries, should demonstrate the political will to honour existing commitments.

The Acting President: In accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 30th plenary meeting, held on 6 October 1998, I now call on the Observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland): The current economic and financial crises affecting a large part of the world have made the implications of globalization and interdependence clear: no longer is it possible to remain an island of prosperity when the rest of the world suffers from a serious economic crisis; poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere.

In situations of economic turmoil, there is always the danger that the previously praised and obvious benefits of the open economy will be forgotten. Yet a resulting general swing back of the pendulum of economic policy must be prevented. A strategy relying on two pillars, linking social and economic policies, should achieve that purpose.

On one hand, protectionism — above all in developed countries — has to be prevented and the pursuit of sound macroeconomic policies has to be actively supported. On the other hand, the potential gains of an open economy have to be more widely spread among and within societies. Within this framework, a key tool will be the creation of freely chosen and remunerative employment in both developed and developing countries and the improvement of socio-economic conditions as specified by the recently adopted

International Labour Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which also calls for new and focused assistance for developing countries.

Innovative solutions and approaches are required to implement such a strategy, and the Swiss Government can fully subscribe to the forward-looking approach the Secretariat has emphasized in its preparatory work. Further steps should be taken, however — for example, better coordination and cooperation within the United Nations family and other international organizations to improve the impact of our actions, which has to be critically reinforced by reaching out to new important players.

Yesterday and today many speakers have suggested numerous interesting approaches, many of which are supported by the Swiss Government. The discussion of these proposals should be initiated at the earliest possible stage. However, permit me to focus today more particularly on a specific Swiss contribution which, hopefully, will promote fruitful deliberations.

During the meetings of the Preparatory Committee held in May 1998, Switzerland invited the United Nations to hold its General Assembly special session from 26 to 30 June in the year 2000 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. This date conveniently follows the annual International Labour Conference, which will also be held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva in June 2000. Other advantages of choosing the Geneva location were presented in document A/AC.253/4. The following comments are therefore limited to particular parts of our offer.

First, Switzerland will assume all additional costs that the United Nations would have incurred. As a result, holding the follow-up conference in Geneva will have no programme budget implications for the United Nations.

Secondly, through voluntary contributions Switzerland will promote the best possible conditions for the participants of the conference. For example, to facilitate the participation of least developed countries, the Swiss Government will match the United Nations contribution for a General Assembly special session and provide an additional airline ticket to Geneva for each least developed country. For countries with no representation in Geneva, there will be fully equipped office space. Furthermore, we are currently negotiating for the best possible participant conditions with various local service providers. For example, government representatives will benefit from special conference rates for accommodation.

As mentioned in the Secretary-General's note, the Swiss Government has announced its willingness to provide further assistance based on an assessment of individual needs. To ensure the continuity of the work between the preparatory process in New York and the follow-up conference in Geneva, we offer to provide assistance for travel between the two cities for countries belonging to the Group of 77 with particular economic difficulties.

As stated in the relevant document of the Preparatory Committee, a definitive decision regarding the place and date of the session has to be taken by the end of this part of the General Assembly session, in 1998. We very much hope that such a decision will be taken, and I would like to thank all those representatives who have already expressed their support for the Swiss proposal.

In conclusion, the future development of worldwide economic and social conditions hinges upon our ability to find innovative solutions. The follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, and more particularly its conference in the year 2000, provide the United Nations with an opportunity to meet this challenge. We are confident that Geneva has shown its capacity to serve as a host for such an important conference and to contribute to its success by inspiring the international community to find innovative solutions for some of the most urgent issues facing it at the dawn of the next century.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision contained in paragraph 87 of document A/53/45, entitled "Provisional agenda for the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 37.

I should like to inform members that a draft resolution on this item will be submitted to the Secretariat at a later date.

Agenda item 118 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Reports of the Fifth Committee (Parts I and II) (A/53/464 and Add.1)

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee which are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of position.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the two reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee.

The Assembly will first turn to part I of the report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/464).

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of part I of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: The Assembly will next turn to part II of the report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/464/Add.1).

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of part II of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 118.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.